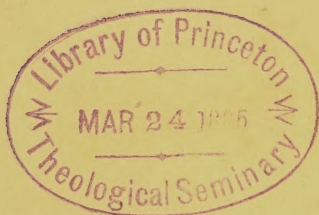


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Ballou, Moses, 1811-1879.
The divine character
vindicated



THE

DIVINE CHARACTER VINDICATED

A REVIEW

OF SOME OF THE PRINCIPAL FEATURES OF REV. DR. E. BEECHER'S
RECENT WORK, ENTITLED: "THE CONFLICT OF AGES; OR,
THE GREAT DEBATE ON THE MORAL RELATIONS
OF GOD AND MAN."

BY REV. MOSES BALLOU.

"Suffer me a little, and I will show thee that I have yet to speak on God's behalf."

JOB 36:2.

"Who ought to desire to continue such a mode of representing and defending God, if another and better mode is possible, or even conceivable?"

DR. E. BEECHER.



REDFIELD

110 & 112 NASSAU-STREET, NEW YORK

1854.

*No clear
concept gain!
uses Bible to
attack Beecher
but requires
it in order
upon himself*

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TO

P. T. BARNUM, ESQ.,

(IRANISTAN.)

My Dear B.---

I am more deeply indebted to you for personal favors, than to any other living man ; and I feel that it is but a poor acknowledgment to beg your acceptance of this volume. Still, I know that you will value it, somewhat, not only for the sake of our personal friendship, but because it is an advocate of that interpretation of Christianity of which you have ever been a most generous and devoted patron.

With renewed assurances of my best regards,

I am, yours, always,

M. B.

BRIDGEPORT, JAN. 22, 1854.

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INTRODUCTION.

THE principal reasons for this work may as well, perhaps, be mentioned here.

1. In the first place, I have, for many years, regarded the "great debate on the moral relations of God and man," as the most momentous and important of any ever opened to the human mind. It takes precedence, in my own thoughts, to all others. None can for a moment compare with it. For even the great primal truths of the being of a God, and of the soul's immortality, are dependent on its results for much of their interest and value. Indeed, everything which men hold as most dear, is wholly dependent upon it. All our spiritual hopes, all our immortal interests, hang upon its issue.

Whether we are living under a Divine system, which seems, to use the searching words of the late pious John Foster, "to be overspread by a lurid and dreadful shade;" which the good Saurin

termed "a mortal poison" to his own heart; "rendering nourishment insipid, pleasure disgusting, and life itself a cruel bitter:" "a system," in the language of the humane Channing, "which makes *existence a curse*, and wraps the universe in gloom;" a system, in looking into which, with a penetrating but sensitive intellect, the eminent Dr. Barnes was forced to exclaim, "My soul is *dark*, DARK, DARK!"—or whether we are really under a Divine government, which is, in its whole spirit and character, truly parental; in which no suffering is permitted except for ultimate good; no sin possible but such as is finite; no retribution inflicted but such as is disciplinary;—a system under which, no wrongs, on our part, will ever be visited in wrongs upon us in return; where nothing of injustice, or even of the spirit of retaliation, exists, or can exist, on the part of the Ruler; where the great moral principles of honor, and of right, and of love, even, according to our highest and best conceptions, infinitely perfected, are evermore truly and faithfully administered; so that, whatever of sin or of suffering may prevail for a season, the existence of each and every individual shall be to him, *on the whole*, an infinite blessing:—these are great questions. The imagination can grasp none greater. They are ques-

tions, compared with which, those that are absorbing the lives and thoughts of our most profound statesmen, jurists, philosophers, and men of science, sink into utter insignificance and nothingness!

2. In the second place, the recent book of Dr. Beecher, entitled the "Conflict of Ages," is, in some respects, one of the most interesting, in its general treatment of this subject, of any which I have ever read. Though dealing with some of its most abstruse particulars, and wading through many a musty volume of dogmatic theology, it has nothing that is stiff, or cold, or formal about it, but is a most vital, fervid, and genial utterance. It comes from the warm heart of a living Christian. And there is a tone of candor and manliness pervading it which is exceedingly refreshing. It easily wins the conviction of a good mind, that the writer of it is no mere religious partisan, who loves a creed more than truth, or popular opinion more than God; no lazy scholar who has turned author to kill time; no theological gladiator, who has come out to flourish his weapons, and utter words of bravado; but that he is a man, and a Christian; with a strong and humane heart beating within him; one who felt it to be a sacred duty which he owed to God, to religion, and to humanity, to help solve, if possible, these great

and oppressive moral problems, which have hung like an incubus upon the church for centuries. And, whatever errors I may endeavor to point out in his views, I must confess that he has uttered them apparently in the spirit of a kind and sincere earnestness ; anxious more for truth and good than all things else, and whose whole soul, with its best energies, was given to the work before him.

It has seemed to me, also, that this volume of his, coming, as it does, from this peculiar source ; from one who deservedly stands high in the ranks of New England orthodoxy ; and addressing itself, in words of manly and genuine regard, to all Christians, must, in all probability, gain a very general hearing, and, by mingling in a wide field of thought, command a greater influence than almost any kindred publication of modern times. Its adoption of an entire new ground of defence for the articles of the church creed ; its rather startling proposition to harmonize the conflicting dogmas of what is popularly termed evangelical religion, by a method hitherto unknown, or, at least, merely hinted at ; and also, what must seem to many minds as the extravagance of the theory which he calls to his aid for this purpose ; will, doubtless, serve to invest it with an attraction not

found in similar works, and render it sought for and read by thousands who would, otherwise, never have attempted it. At any rate, it can hardly be doubted, that, whatever may be the character of its effects, they will be somewhat striking and wide-spread. Few, in this age of activity, can read so earnest and vigorous a production, wholly uninfluenced. They must think of it. They must reflect upon it, and it will constitute no trivial portion of those elements which are so rapidly modifying and changing public opinion upon the subject of our religion.

That it will accomplish its author's chief purpose, in the way by which he evidently intended that it should, I have no great reason to believe. That it will do something like this, or even better than this, in another way, I confidently expect. Directly and immediately, it may seem to do but little, but indirectly and ultimately, I think that it will do much to help introduce better views of God, and truth, and human destiny, than those which now prevail. It gives a new complexion to the great conflict. It develops its hostile elements in a new light. It shows, I think, conclusively, that they are, in their very nature, antagonistic. There is no possible mode of *readjustment* which can harmonize them. Nothing

short of an entire *re-construction* of some of them, with new materials, can effect a perfect reconciliation. And while a large share of the great body of orthodox Christians, and especially the younger portion, whose views are not so rigidly fixed, will hesitate, and probably refuse to acknowledge our author's solution of the difficulties in question, yet, he has so arrayed these difficulties in all their frightful magnitude, that they must shrink from an open acknowledgment and defence of the dogmas involving them, and finally compel a resort to those which are more rational and consistent.

It would really seem that those who have heretofore nominally accepted the prevailing views concerning entire native depravity, and infinite retribution, must see, in the light of his argument, the gross dishonor which they reflect upon the Divine character, and shrink from longer reproaching the Supreme Being with imputations which must render his name forever revolting. To accept our author's theory, I think, they will not. To reject it, and still cling to their present eternally hostile dogmas, I think, they cannot: and I must therefore regard them as in a much more hopeful condition than they would be otherwise.

The demand for a just, and righteous, and good

Being, whom we may love, reverence, and adore, is a demand of the soul itself. A general atheistic condition can never be expected. And if the soul requires a God, and will not content itself without one, it requires also that He shall be infinitely deserving of all its deep love and trust. Demon-worship is fast becoming obsolete. Fear, servile fear, as a religious influence, is rapidly losing its ancient hold upon the public mind. Everywhere men are rising up and proclaiming, in a voice "loud as the sound of many waters," that they will have a good God, or no God. Everything now seems rapidly tending to this result. And among the tens of thousands who are daily living "without God in the world," O how many are doing so because they can see no *good* Being whose guidance they may implore, and into whose arms of love they may cast themselves!

As I regard it, therefore, our author has done an invaluable service to true religion, in placing before the Christian world a clear and convincing view of the utter and fatal antagonism between the Divine character and the dogmas referred to: and I cannot but believe, contrary to his own conviction, that the result will be, to some extent, at least, such a radical modification of these dogmas

as will finally render them harmonious and consistent with the Divine nature. The truth is, that something of this kind must be done. Some effort must be made to reconcile religion with the reason and the hearts of men, or skepticism and irreligion will become triumphant.

Will our author's new theory answer this purpose? I apprehend that it will not. I do not think that it can possibly be proved to general acceptance. I am led to this opinion, chiefly, from the fact, that even admitting his view of a *pre-existent* state, in which men sinned and fell, and from which they have brought into this world the elements of their depravity, there are still many other considerations, which are untouched by this view, and which involve difficulties to my mind equally as great as those which he thus attempts to remove. Not only does it fail in point of substantial evidence, but it does not serve, by any means, to vindicate the divine character. And if this is found to be the case, as I sincerely believe that it will, then there appears to be no other alternative. These opposing doctrines must be thoroughly re-examined. Those portions of them which are found defective or wanting in proof, must be given up. Nothing but thoroughly established facts—facts which ad-

mit of no resistance—must be admitted, if they serve to perpetuate the conflict. In this case, it is easy to see which class of these hostile forces must finally give way. This I have already intimated. We can never give up the essential honor, justice, and goodness of God. Men will not long give up their hold on these, even if they are prevailed upon to do so for a little season. They will ultimately see that when this is yielded, all else that is valuable goes with it. On this point, I am happy to avail myself of the forcible language of our author: "If His honor is at stake, all else must give way. What are creeds, institutions, or denominations, in comparison with Him for whose honor they are professedly made, and for whom alone they avow a desire to exist?" (p. 445.) We can never succeed in such a contest with the perfections of the Almighty. They constitute an impregnable fortress. Our modes of attack may serve to obscure, but they can never wholly destroy them. They stand before us in all the sublime majesty of infinite and eternal realities. There they must stand forever. And were it possible for us to succeed in their final overthrow—could we in any way bring up opposing forces which would vitally impair or ruin them—it would be a result from which we should

suffer the most after all. It would leave us in the lamentable condition of king Pyrrhus—we might gain the battle, but we should be ruined in the war!

3. In the third place, it is with such views and feelings that I have felt impelled to approach the further discussion of the great questions involved in "The Conflict of Ages." I have hoped, in doing this, that I might help forward what I have apprehended would be the indirect results of that work. Sincerely believing it to be indispensable to the interests of Divine truth that the character of God should be maintained in all its purity and perfection, I have desired to assist in so re-modelling the conflicting dogmas of the church, that this dreadful antagonism shall no longer work its mischief in the world. I cannot but regard Dr. Beecher's mode of explanation as radically defective. I do not believe that his theory is true, or can be fully sustained. It will not end the conflict, but only prove that it must be done in some other manner. That true views of depravity and retribution will appear perfectly in harmony with the Divine character, I am fully satisfied. To assist, if possible, in the establishment of such views, is my most earnest desire. I would aid in opening a way by which the reason and the heart

may be reconciled to God—to so exhibit Him, that he may be regarded as the “One altogether lovely”—whose ways, in his moral government, are holy, just, and good—and, who is really deserving of all the deep homage of all human souls.

It is my sincere conviction that this only can interpose an effectual barrier to the present tide of atheistic speculation, or check the rapid and mournful tendencies of the age to a condition of religious indifference which is almost, if not quite, as fatal.

We can hardly hope to remove these evils until we can reach the causes in which they originate. Many of these causes, as I am often told by the skeptic, are to be found in irrational creeds and contradictory dogmas. And, until these are reformed, the greatest hindrances to the full success of the gospel, and the spiritual redemption of society, will remain unmoved.

Cannot this be accomplished? Cannot the Divine science of religion, like any other science, be so exhibited as to win alike the assent of all minds which are turned to it in a spirit of candor? Must it not be in itself quite as rational and consistent as any other system of truth?

I see no reason to think otherwise. It seems to me that there is no science which is characterized

by more of simplicity, and harmony, and beauty, than the religion of Jesus Christ. And, in the humble but earnest endeavor to exhibit more of this harmony, I have seriously approached the task of reviewing some of the principal features of Dr. Beecher's late book.

I have not done this without some degree of hesitancy and reluctance, I must confess. I thought that I had hardly the time or means at hand to render it the most ample justice, even if I had the ability otherwise. Still, hurried along by weighty considerations, already suggested, I would do what I can, under the circumstances, trusting that I shall at least do our author, or his volume, or the great cause of religious truth, no actual wrong.

If wiser heads, and abler pens, shall enter upon this same field, as I can hardly doubt that they will, I shall only be the more rejoiced in the hope of the speedy and final conquest of truth.

I sincerely ask that the respected author, whose work I am about to consider, may be assured, in case these pages should ever come under his notice, that, if I have rightly understood him, the main current of our prevailing purpose runs together. I have altogether mistaken him if his leading wish was not to wipe those dreadful stains of reproach from the Divine character, which the

church has allowed to rest upon it for so many ages—to exhibit the entire harmony between it and the religion of Jesus—and to so reconcile the reason and the hearts of men to the true Christian system, that through this they may become united to our Heavenly Father. Such, too, is my first wish, and my most fervent prayer.

I trust, therefore, that he will not regard me in the light of a mere disputant, desirous chiefly of a theological combat—not, indeed, as wishing to attack any man's views or opinions for so very low and unworthy a purpose—but only consenting to do this, principally, because the best interests of Christ's kingdom are honestly thought to demand it, because a felt pressure of duty urges me to the work. His volume has shown us that such a discussion is not necessarily dry and tedious in its character, or inconsistent with candor, courtesy, and kindness, to those who differ from us. And, though I do not hope to give to my treatment of the subject the pervading interest which he has thrown over his, or win so favorably the attention of the public mind, still, if a love of truth that is stronger than the love of sect or creed, and a genuine regard for the spiritual interests of our race, shall serve to render it acceptable, he shall

have no occasion to complain of my *manner*, whatever he may think or say of my *matter*.

At any rate, however he may be disposed to regard this review, or its author, is of very little comparative importance after all. It would be pleasant indeed to know that he had rightly apprehended the purpose of the one, and the spirit of the other. But all this weighs as nothing in the scale against the almost infinite magnitude of the subjects which this discussion involves. These are of too fearful import to be crowded out by other thoughts. The vital interests and the thrilling hopes which hang upon their issue—these will all remain when our work on earth is finished. They will, doubtless, agitate millions of souls long after we are gone. Other and distant ages will come up to consider them, when our very names perhaps are forgotten. For they are subjects which concern, not us alone, but all men. They are not for the present hour only, but for all time—aye, for eternity!

4. Finally: I desire merely to add, that what has constituted the chief determining motive in the decision to put forth this review, springs from a deep and unwavering conviction of the truth of the essential principles assumed or advocated by it, and a sincere wish to impart some portion of

the serene joy with which they have filled my own soul, if possible, to the souls of other men. I am far too happy in their possession to be very selfish in this respect. They comprise the chief treasure of my soul. In their radiant light, the darkest scenes of human life are relieved by gleams of hope, and the rising mist of tears is adorned with the bow of promise. They are my supreme source of comfort. They render God an unfailing refuge. All things else which I love in life, are not for one moment to be compared to them.

And, were I compelled to so dread an extremity—were I driven to choose between parting with them, or with the being which God has given me, the task might seem severe indeed; but it would not be one over which I should long hesitate. If I know my own heart, I should say at once, Either leave me these, or give me back that non-existence from the calm depths of which His own free will has raised me!

REVIEW.

CHAPTER I.

ANALYSIS OF THE WORK, SO FAR AS IT IS CONSIDERED
ESSENTIAL TO THE PURPOSE OF THE REVIEW.

1.—*Misadjustment of the moving powers of
the Christian System.*

FOLLOWING a very winning introduction, our author commences the main body of his work with an endeavor to show that there is a vital conflict in the working forces of the present orthodox system. In the incessant warfare which has been going on in the church ever since the third and fourth centuries; in the contests of Augustinians with Pelagians, in former times, and between "Old-School" and "New-School" theology in our own day; he finds unmistakable evidences of something radically hostile to each other in the different views of the great body of the church, as these are professedly held in common. He compares their action to the two wheels of a

steamship, one of which revolves forward and the other backward. These moving powers of the Christian system, as he terms them, are summed up in the following words :

“ 1. A true and thorough statement of what is involved in the fallen and ruined condition of man as a sinner. /

“ 2. A full development of the honor, justice, and benevolence of God, in all his dealings with man, so made as, in the first place, to free him from the charge of dishonorably ruining them, and then to exhibit him as earnestly and benevolently engaged in efforts for their salvation, through Christ, after they have been ruined by their own fault.” (pp. 16, 17.) Each of these he regards as indispensable, in the great work of the moral renovation of men. And what renders them conflicting, in his view, is nothing inherent in the doctrines themselves, but is caused by merely a *traditional mis-adjustment*.

The views of human depravity, as maintained essentially by Augustine, Calvin, the Reformers, and all of the present day who are acknowledged as evangelical, are *true*, as he believes. It is also *true*, as is virtually maintained by all those, that God is honorable, just, and good, in all his original dealings with men. But between these two facts, as now generally held, there is entire hostility. Like the wheels of the ship referred to,

they act against each other. Here is the grand central point, from which "The Conflict of Ages" has sprung.

It has formed the ground-work of almost endless debates, and has called out an immense amount of intellectual and moral force, which ought to have been expended more directly in the great work of human salvation. Here, then, the heart of the main controversy is laid open, and our author hopes, by a new process, that he may so re-adjust these conflicting forces that they shall, hereafter, work harmoniously together.

CHAPTER II.

ANALYSIS CONTINUED.

2.—*The principles of honor and right stated and defended.*

FROM the foregoing presentation of the main difficulty, Dr. Beecher passes to a clear and most conclusive proof of all its main features. He shows that the two conflicting facts are each firmly and fatally held by the great body of his church.

First; the principles of moral rectitude, as they relate to the Supreme Being. "What, then," he asks, "are the principles of honor and of right, by which the conduct of God ought to be regulated in his dealings with his creatures, and especially with new-created minds?" (p. 19.) In reply to this question, he takes, as I think, the only proper ground, namely,—that the human mind seizes upon these principles intuitively; that our convictions concerning them are not the result of any logical process, but flow from the laws of our moral nature; that those principles are seen

by the reason, just as external objects are seen by the eye; and with such precision and certainty that we may very properly call it the voice of God speaking through our moral constitution. These moral judgments of ours, are, in his view, quite as reliable as any principle or rule which could be drawn from the Holy Scriptures. "Forgetful of this fact," he says,—alluding to those who think more of God's "verbal revelations" than of any other,—"they have often, by unfounded interpretations of Scripture, done violence to the mind, and overruled the decisions made by God himself through it, and then sought shelter in faith and mystery. To avert, therefore, such results," he proceeds "to show that there are divinely-given convictions as to honor and right, * * * which God has made the human mind to form with intuitive certainty, and which he designed to be a divine disclosure of the principles by which he regulates his own conduct." (p. 20.) This fact, he proceeds to establish by the most abundant proof, drawn, not from unregenerated minds alone, but from the greatest and best in his church, as well as from the Holy Scriptures. Calvin and Melancthon, Drs. Chalmers and Alexander, together with Professors Stuart, Hodge, and Tholuck, are quoted at large, as confidently holding to this belief; and it is amply deduced also from the current tenor of the revealed word.

Thus ; Paul's clear declaration that the gentiles, or heathen, do really have an active working *conscience* within them, though they have no written revelation, shows that the law of God had been written on their hearts : and the fact that they were in the habit of morally judging of each other,—“accusing, or else excusing one another,”—(Rom. 2 : 15,) equally shows that they had a rule of right in their moral nature. On this ground God judges them, and has a right so to do. This moral sense, Christ also appeals to, in the question,—“Why, even of yourselves, judge ye not what is right ?”—and the appeal establishes the view that this intuitive idea of rectitude is really of divine authority.

Our author states four points to which these principles have especial reference.

“1. The distinction that ought to be made between the innocent and the guilty.

“2. The distinction that ought to be made between original constitution and responsible moral character.

“3. The relations and obligations that exist between great and powerful minds and such as are more feeble and limited, and especially between the great self-sustained mind and such as are inferior and dependent.

“4. The obligations of the Creator to new-

created beings, as to their original constitution, powers, circumstances, and probation."

"On all these points," he adds, "God has made the human mind to have decided intuitive convictions as to what is consistent with equity and honor." (pp. 28, 29.) It may be proper to observe, here, that there is no position, in the volume under consideration, chosen with more care than this, or defended, in every respect, with more conclusive authority. I would call particular attention to it now, not only because our author regards it as fundamental and important, but, also, because I regard it as a position not to be successfully controverted, and as a *rule* which I shall have occasion to use freely in the course of this review.

"I deem it therefore important," he affirms,—
"nay, essential—to show that the position which I shall hereafter assume is not improper rationalism, but a doctrine of the word of God, as clearly revealed as the doctrine of depravity itself. God himself declares that the intuitive perceptions of the human mind, as to honor and right, are a revelation from the creator,—a divine law of supreme and binding authority. God himself enjoins it on men, as a sacred duty, to judge by them. He does not feel honored by any defence which disregards them. Nay, he admits that his own conduct is amenable to judgment by these prin-

ciples, and defends himself by an appeal to the same." (p. 26.)

"We must therefore of necessity assume, not only that there are judgments concerning honor and right which God has made the human mind to form with intuitive certainty, but that they are common to God and to man. This is a fundamental doctrine of the bible. To test any alleged acts of God by such principles, is not improper rationalizing. God not only authorizes, but even enjoins it as a sacred duty. To this point I call special attention." (p. 27.)

After proceeding to show that the statements of Turretin, Watts, the Westminster divines, and the Princeton school also, involve all which is claimed in this exposé of the principles of honor and right, he closes his presentation of them in the following eloquent terms:

"It has been the great evil of other ages that principles like these, although avowed, have not been consistently carried out. They need to be exalted, made prominent, and insisted on. If true at all, they are to all created beings the most fundamental and most momentous truths in the universe of God. They are like a full-orbed sun, in the centre of all created existence. No system can be truly seen but in their light. No system can be true which really contravenes them. For God is all glorious, all holy, all just, all honorable,

all good. He cannot but observe the true principles of honor and of right. For, though he often dwelleth in the thick darkness, and deep clouds are his pavilion, yet now and evermore righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne." (p. 49.)

CHAPTER III.

ANALYSIS CONTINUED.

3.—Application of Principles.—Statement of the Doctrine of Human Depravity.

THE application of the foregoing principles to the Divine Economy, justifies our author in the following inferences: 1. If God as an infinite parent creates inferior or dependent minds, especially for an eternal destiny, he is under the strictest moral obligation to feel and act towards them in a manner honorable, just, and kind, and with a careful regard to their highest and best interests. "Is not this the dividing line between the divine and the satanic spirit?" 2. God cannot hold his creatures responsible for anything of which they are not really and truly the authors. For nothing belonging to their original constitution can he hold them accountable, but only for that moral character resulting from the use of powers conferred. 3. As God requires moral rectitude of us, he will abide by these rules himself. He will not violate his own laws. 4. He will not in any way make

one being accountable for that in which he does not participate, but which wholly belongs to another. 5. As men are created with a view to their endless existence, they should be endowed with such an original constitution as would be most favorable to their ultimate enjoyment. For whatever belongs to their nature, God is responsible; and if that nature, anterior to their choice or action, is radically deranged or corrupted, he has not dealt justly by them. 6. God should place his creatures under circumstances as favorable as possible to the highest good of all. (pp. 31—38.)

In fact, these principles, according to the free acknowledgment of standard orthodox writers whom he quotes, involve, in new-created beings, “as the essential basis of a fair probation, a good original constitution, well proportioned powers, and a decided and powerful bias to good, resulting at first in actual and perfect obedience to the law of God.” (p. 47.)

Here, then, we have one wheel of the theological ship; one of the antagonistic forces in the moving powers of Christianity; one of the two great parties between whom the conflict of ages has been going on. To develop the full strength of this hostility, our author proceeds to state that radical view of human depravity which has seemed most satisfactory to the best minds in his church, and the fact of which I understand him fully and

heartily to adopt. Its chief points are the following, viz.: That there is a radical depravity inherent in our very *nature*,—that prior to the act of a regenerating divine influence, no good deed or thought is possible on the part of any one; that somehow mysteriously in the person of Adam, as our representative, or federal head, or in his act of transgression strangely imputed to us, or regarded as essentially our own personal act; or through the order of a corrupt generation proceeding from Adam, or in some other way not fully known, we commence our mortal existence here with a moral constitution as depraved as that of Satan, with a fearful and fatal tendency to all evil; so that even before we are born, and, of course, prior to any thought, will, or action on our part, we are properly under the wrath and curse of God; that, with such an incarnation of evil in our whole moral being, we are placed in this world beset with every form of temptation that can be generated in a corrupt society; with the devil and wicked spirits swarming along our path, unseen, from childhood; and, that, finally, (to make the picture darker than Erebus,) not only for our actual sins committed here, but for this previous deep and damning depravity of our nature, we are *justly* liable to all the sufferings of the present life, to death itself, and to the pains of hell forever!

This dreadful view of the nature and condition

of mankind, which makes the blood chill and the flesh creep, is shown by ample quotations to have been held as essential to orthodoxy, both in ancient and modern times. Testimony, which in the view of our author, seems corroborative of this dogma, is found in some florid and rhetorical descriptions which Unitarian writers have sometimes given of the facts which appear to lie upon the surface of human life.

He uses the concessions of those men to prepare the way for the more terrible accounts given by standard orthodox writers touching this matter. John Calvin, the Synod of Dort, the Helvetian confession, the confession of Bohemia, the French confession, the Church of England, the confession of Augsburg, and of Moravia, together with the Westminster divines, and the Reformers, are all shown, by full quotations and comments, to have maintained, essentially, the views of which I have given the summary. No one can accuse them of a want of thoroughness in this matter. Their language is very explicit. They speak of "the whole nature" as "a seed of sin;" of being "depraved in all parts of our nature;" of "the propagation of a vicious nature," and of a "natural corruption" which allows us to "do no good of ourselves—no, not so much as think of any." "Infants," they tell us, "bring their condemnation with them from their mother's womb;" and while they as yet

lie hidden before birth, are "deserving of eternal death before God!"

It must be confessed, that, as Dr. Beecher has presented this subject, he has embraced the most extreme views which have ever been held in regard to it, or which it would seem can be held; and, yet, I cannot perceive that he has done the slightest injustice to his authorities, or rendered them otherwise than with perfect fairness, if we except a little discrepancy, resulting, doubtless, from oversight, in his account of Unitarian concessions. As, in general, he has proceeded, in great candor, to develop what we must regard as standard orthodoxy in reference to human depravity,—not the orthodoxy of past ages only, but essentially that of all who are acknowledged as evangelical at the present time. This, it should be borne in mind, is also essentially *his own view*, as I understand it; he differing from his brethren chiefly as to its *rationale*, or the philosophy of its introduction; and consequently, as to the mode of explaining it in harmony with the divine character.

Here, then, in this radical view of human depravity, which he assumes to be fully revealed in the bible, confirmed by all honest and thorough observation, and placed beyond doubt by the deepest and most reliable christian experience, he finds the other wheel of the theological ship revolving

in a contrary direction to that of the former ; the other moving force of the christian system in an antagonistic position ; the other party, between which and the one before mentioned, there has been a conflict of ages, and is, still, the most determined hostility. Thus the conflict is brought out as a fearful and apparently fatal reality. The great moral *principles* on the one hand, and the *facts* on the other, rise up in determined opposition. "In contemplating them as they have been set forth, two things," says our author, "strike the mind as worthy of notice ; one, that each, in its radical elements, is sustained by its own independent and indestructible evidence ; the other, that as christianity is at present adjusted, there is no possibility of a full and harmonious development of them both, but, on the other hand, one constantly conflicts with, and tends to repress and even to destroy, the other." (pp. 79, 80.)

The way in which this conflict has been treated by most of the great lights of the church, is very interesting, as showing us that these two hostile positions cannot be regarded by any one as in perfect harmony. Thus, those who have a fine sense of moral rectitude, and who cannot consent to impeach the justice and goodness of God, although they may really entertain the opposing view of native depravity, find themselves continually urged to so modify its harsher features, as to reconcile it,

if possible, with the perfections of the divine character. But this cannot be done without tending so far towards Pelagianism as to destroy the vital elements of the doctrine.

Those who, on the other hand, are less thoughtful of the divine honor, or more fully absorbed with oppressive views of human depravity, find equal temptations to lower the standard of the divine character; denying, perhaps, that we are qualified to judge of it, or that it is a "profound and awful mystery," or that God, as a sovereign, is not bound by the principles of honor and right, or in some way to endeavor to evade the force of this terrible conflict.

While there is still another class, of whom our author also speaks, who, struggling to retain in full these opposing forces, "run into self-contradiction," and spend their strength in building with one hand what they are industriously pulling down with the other.

These two positions,—the moral principles of the divine character, on the one side, and the total depravity of human nature, on the other side,—Dr. Beecher maintains, are, without his mode of re-adjustment, in total and irreconcilable hostility. As the church holds them, they cannot be harmonized.

He goes into a lengthy investigation of the parties and conflicts to which it has given rise, and the continual struggles which have been going on

for centuries, among the best and greatest of men, in the fruitless attempt to discover some possible method of avoiding this fatal contradiction. But there it still stands, frowning upon them in all its original deformity. Turn which way they will, it is sure to meet them. There is no evading, or getting around, or over it. Almost every conceivable trick of logic has been tried to solve it, and the convenient plea of mystery at last resorted to to shut it out from sight.

The picture which our author sketches of this conflict, (pp. 12, 13) is a mournful one, but by no means, as I should judge, overwrought. "In it an incredible amount of intellect, emotion and energy has been expended. Each party has been filled with alarm at the dangerous tendencies, or alleged pernicious influence, of some fondly-cherished principles of the other, as threatening either to subvert the gospel or to destroy its power. * * * Pious men * * have been cut to the heart by a keen sense of injustice, when suspicions have been created and disseminated, or even direct charges made, that they were unsound in the faith, and dangerous heresiarchs. * * * The internal struggles and convulsions thus produced in this large body of churches, have wasted an amount of energy great almost beyond imagination. The Presbyterian church has been twice rent asunder. The New England Congregational churches, incapable,

by reason of their organization, of such a division, have yet been, in fact, thrown into opposing parties, and agitated and torn by incessant and painful strife."

This warfare throughout, as the Doctor plainly shows, has been one of the most unhappy and suicidal character. Because each party in the strife, in attempting an attack upon the position of the other, was virtually encountering one branch of its own views, and weakening, if possible, the groundwork of opinions which were acknowledged on all hands to be essential to its own orthodoxy. Every difficulty raised by either was a stone loosened in its own edifice. Every problem which either started, was returned to its own hands for solution.

All the efforts of both, therefore, were but so many attempts at self-destruction, and, meantime, the source of the great conflict was left untouched. Both of the conflicting opinions were held in common by all parties. All alike held nominally to the divine perfections. All alike held the dogma of native depravity. And no modification of either of these, which would go one step towards their actual reconciliation, was possible, that was not also destructive of the doctrine itself; while any attempted modification short of this was fruitless, leaving the main difficulty as great as ever.

Thus, if the old-school position, that the nature

of man before birth was actually sinful, was regarded as a reflection upon the divine honor, the new school did not help the matter much by suggesting that the original depravity was only such that sin, and nothing but sin, was certain and continual from the moment in which thought and action began. And the same thing may be said of all the varied and subtle speculations which have aimed at a serious change in these conflicting opinions. If New Haven objects to the views of Edwards, she substitutes nothing in their stead more harmonious. Andover and Princeton may hurl back and forth the charges of heresy, and still both retain the elements of the great problem unsolved. No statement of the doctrine of human depravity, by any of them, goes far enough to relieve the divine honor. It rises like a dark spirit accusing the Eternal goodness. No theological incantations can lay it. Beaten down in one form, it rises immediately in another equally fearful. The mightiest efforts of the church, for centuries, have been spent upon it in vain. In whatever form they have attempted its exhibition, short of downright Pelagianism, it is found hostile to all proper ideas of the rectitude of the Divine Ruler.

It is offensive to all our best conceptions of God's character. It outrages the moral sense of men, by claiming that our Creator has endowed us with, at least, a depraved and corrupt nature to

begin with ; that he has placed us under circumstances of great and continued temptation, with all vile passions within us, and a host of devils without us, all struggling together to drag us downward ; and then, to sum up the infinite amount of wrong done to us, he has assigned us to a strictly endless retribution, as the necessary and horrible result !

Here, then, in the radical antagonism which exists between this doctrine, in all its ordinary forms, and the Divine perfections, the Doctor finds the pertinent and forcible title to his volume. It is, and has been, truly, as he terms it, "the conflict of ages." And that vast establishment known as Orthodoxy must, in his opinion, tremble for its very existence, unless some method is devised, which will serve to relieve the Divine character of the severe reproaches with which this doctrine serves to cover it.

That this position is an impregnable one ; that it forms the strong point of his book, will be more fully evinced before I close.

CHAPTER IV.

ANALYSIS CONTINUED.

4.—*Various attempts at solution, and their failure.*

AFTER stating the conflict, and confirming its reality, our author passes to the specification of five different theories which serve to illustrate it as it exists in experience.

First, the old-school-theology: "The radical element" of this is found in "the doctrine of real, responsible, punishable depravity in man before voluntary action. Whether this depravity be called boldly a depraved or a corrupt nature; or, more mildly, innate or inherent depravity, it comes, at last, to the same thing." (p. 89.) One of the principal proofs relied on here is that of a deep christian experience, like that of Dr. Edwards. True, it is claimed that with this experience, "history and the bible coincide;" but the main proof is, after all, to be found in the testimony of such men in regard to their own personal condition. "They know their original depravity, just as a man restored to health knows that he was diseased."

This view, Dr. Beecher believes, has exerted a mighty, and, on the whole, beneficial influence, but is opposed by a "power springing from the deepest sources of intuitive human conviction." "Its advocates have been obliged to work against a steady, powerful and deathless reaction."

The main difficulties of this system, as he regards it, grow out of the assertion that all men, even before thought or action have so "forfeited their rights as new-created beings," as to fall justly under the Divine displeasure.

God is bound by the laws of honor towards a new-made being, until its rights have become forfeited, *and upon the allegation that they are thus forfeited, before birth even, in the case of all men, rests their whole defence of the character of God.* The testimony of Doct. Woods, Prof. Hodge, Abelard, and Pascal, is quoted at large as clearly evincing that there is no possible mode of harmonizing this doctrine with the Divine attributes, and that its advocates, seeing this plainly, have felt that their only plea of defence was to be found in terming it "a mystery." Thus, the principles of honor and right, in God, are shown to react fatally against this theory.

Secondly, "The philosophy of the Unitarian theology" is next examined. "It is an entire recoil from old-school theology to the other extreme.

It is an experience in which a feeling sense of the truth and importance of the great principles of honor and right, in their relations to God, so far gains the ascendancy as to lead to the entire rejection of the radical facts which have been stated concerning human depravity and the ruined condition of man." (p. 116.)

Our author concedes, with much frankness, here, that there has not only been a logical consistency maintained in carrying out the views of this class, but that the impelling force which has driven to it is to be sought in some of the highest and noblest intuitions of human nature. Dr. Channing, and others of his school, are spoken of with such apparent respect as their true merits would seem to require, and their views, for the most part, treated as views should be which are held in a spirit of deep sincerity, and of loyalty to truth and rectitude.

Still, he professes to find facts which react with great force against this system. As the old-school theology failed to account for the proper action of the principles of moral rectitude in the Divine character, so this view, on the other hand, fails to account for the facts of human depravity. And the chief reason, in his opinion, why this system does not generally prevail, is, that these facts constantly rise up against it. Even Unitarians, he

thinks, sometimes represent them in a light fatal to it.*

I may add, here, that this philosophy, he regards also, as fatally degrading to the character of free-agency ; inasmuch as it implies that sinless obedience is impossible to such condition.

Thirdly : The next great effort which has been made to avoid the difficulties which are involved in this conflict, and which our author proceeds to consider, is what he terms the "Philosophy of Orthodox Universalism." The peculiarity of this philosophy consists simply in rejecting the awful doctrine of strictly endless hell-torments. In every other respect, it is as essentially orthodox as the most rigid Calvinism. The only prominent representative of this doctrine named, is the late Rev. John Foster, a man of whose intellectual qualities and personal piety, Dr. Beecher speaks in the highest terms of praise. Foster, a clergyman of the Baptist church, and bred in Calvinistic views, could not be expected, of course, to throw them all off at once ; and though he retained his earlier belief in total depravity, and other kindred ideas, yet his keen moral discrimination, and his high sense of rectitude and honor, made him recoil from

* There is a slight inconsistency in Mr. Beecher's account of the statements of Unitarians in regard to the *facts* of depravity, occurring on pages 57 and 219. One represents them as painting the picture too darkly ; the other, as not dark enough. Attention, I perceive, is called to it by Rev. Mr. Ellis, in the Christian Examiner.

the thought that God would add to all the other evils of human existence, a never-ending retribution. By denying this he hoped to reconcile the Divine dealings with his own fine sense of what was just and right. But notwithstanding Doctor Beecher acknowledges the great force of his appeal, and confesses that until the orthodox system is better adjusted, "there will be a powerful tendency to the results at which Foster arrived;" that according to the admission of Dr. Woods, Foster's name and writings are calculated "to unsettle the faith of multitudes;" still he finds in the testimony of christian experience, and assumes to find in the words of the bible, such powerful support to the doctrine of endless punishment, as he believed must forever prevent the views of Foster from gaining a general acceptance among men.

So strong are the revelations of christian consciousness as to sin, and so strong is the scriptural evidence for the eternity of future punishments, that, as he thinks, this plan for ending the conflict, also signally fails. Nevertheless, it will be impossible to prevent some pious persons from following in the footsteps of this excellent and truly great man.

Fourthly: Our author passes to consider "the philosophy of the new-school theology." This, like the Unitarian philosophy, attempts the solution of the main difficulty; the reconciling of the

antagonistic forces in christianity, by what is generally considered as a modification of one of them,—the doctrine of depravity,—from the stern presentation made of it by the old-school divinity. He represents the advocates of the new-school as endeavoring so to soften the features of this doctrine, as to show, if possible, that God was not dishonorable in regard to the fall of men, and that their eternal punishment, therefore, is neither incredible, or inconsistent with his benevolence and rectitude. This view joins issue with that of the old school, in maintaining that our nature is not of itself actually sinful; that God does not regard Adam's act of transgression as though it were really our act; that our depravity on entering this world is not one of *ability*, but of *will*—(a distinction exceedingly difficult for my mind to embrace), and that God, therefore, punishes us only for this perverse will, and the wicked life to which it must surely lead us. This view, although he admires the life and efficiency which it has infused into the churches where it has prevailed, is nevertheless reacted against from two sources, viz: either, it is regarded as failing to account for the exceeding sinfulness of men, except on the ground that it is produced by a direct divine agency, which would impeach the Divine honor, or, it supposes that such horrible depravity as is acknowledged on all hands really

to exist, has sprung alone from an innocent nature placed under circumstances of temptation. Now as this philosophy urges that men enter on this state of existence with such a fatal tendency to sin as will be sure, without regeneration, to seal their final ruin, our author, very properly, maintains that it utterly fails to solve the great problem which he has raised, and is open to powerful attack from the principles of honor and benevolence.

Fifth : The last experience which the Doctor mentions, as growing out of this conflict, is that in which the Divine glory is represented as being in "eclipse." It is the experience so forcibly described by Foster, and intimated by Channing, and common indeed to some of the finest minds ; in which the soul, unable to solve the great problem, with all its terrible difficulties standing out in fearful prominence, finds itself utterly unable to harmonize the admitted facts with the Divine rectitude, and, zealous of the honor of God, sees his character tarnished, and his name disgraced, and is still without a word which can be uttered in his behalf. A condition more truly rayless and hopeless hardly seems within reach of the imagination. Doctor Beecher frankly acknowledges to having been in something like this condition for a time himself. "How many ever pass in fact into this dark valley," he says, "I have no means of determining.

It is not an experience that men are disposed to make public. * * I have, however, a full knowledge only of what I have learned by experience. For a time the system of this world rose before my mind, in the same manner, as far as I can judge, as it did before the minds of Channing and Foster. But I was entirely unable to find relief as they did. * * Hence, for a time, all was dark as night." O! how many, whose eyes will rest upon his pages, will feel them filling in sympathy for those whose condition is thus hopeless, and whose ability to appreciate it will be drawn from the bitter depths of their own experience. As I shall wish to make some use of it in its proper place, I can hardly refrain from quoting his truly impressive and searching description of such a state. "Who can describe the gloom of him who looks on such a prospect? How dark appears to him the history of man! He looks with pity on the children that pass him in the street. The more violent manifestations of their depravity seem to be the unfoldings of a corrupt nature, given to them by God before any knowledge, choice, or consent, of their own. Mercy now seems to be no mercy, and he who once delighted to speak of the love of Christ is obliged to close his lips in silence, for the original wrong of giving man such a nature seems so great, that no subsequent acts can atone for the deed. In this state of mind, he

who once delighted to pray, kneels and rises again, *because he cannot sincerely worship the only God whom he sees.* His distress is not on his own account. He feels that God has redeemed and regenerated him; but this gives him no relief. *He feels as if he could not be BRIBED by the offer of all the honors of the universe to pretend to worship or praise a God whose character he cannot defend."* (p. 190.) The *italics* in the above quotation, are my own; but who cannot see that the eloquence of the statement was inspired by the recollections of an experience, honorable to his own moral nature, but lurid and baneful in its character?

Out of the bitter depths of this experience, it seems that he finally passed; not as Dr. Channing, by denying the orthodox doctrine of depravity; nor as Foster, by discarding the infinite consequences of this depravity; but by an entirely different process, of which I will now pass to the statement.

CHAPTER V.

ANALYSIS CONCLUDED.

5.—*The readjustment, or mode of solution.*

OUR author, having thus stated the facts of the great conflict, and showed that no method ever yet suggested for their reconciliation is effectual, passes, in his third book, to mention the *cause* of the difficulty, and to present his own theory for its removal. The former, he believes to be the unwarranted assumption "*that men as they come into this world are new-created beings.*" *New-born*, they are, of course, but not, as he thinks, *new-created*.

The latter is to be found in the fact of their PRE-EXISTENCE. To state the matter as I understand him to present it—God, in the beginning, created a race of spiritual beings. These he constituted free-agents, and dealt by them, in all things, justly, honorably, and even kindly. He gave them a nature essentially good, with well-balanced minds, and constitutional faculties, tending powerfully to obedience and holiness. Every

thing was favorable to their continued virtue and enjoyment. There were no devils in existence then to lead them astray ; no evil influences of any great magnitude to act upon them ; no temptations which they were not easily able to resist and conquer. Thus, the Divine Being had done every thing for them which he well could do. No blame, therefore, could be attached to Him, whatever course they might see fit to pursue. In short, all the moral principles which we necessarily connect with our ideas of the Divine nature, were plainly developed in these new-created spirits. All the claims of these principles were fully met and answered in the treatment they received. So that, if this hypothesis can be clearly and conclusively established, then the great conflict, so far as it regards the demands of honor and right towards new-created minds, must be completely reconciled. All appearance of it vanishes away. In this respect, the Divine character shines out in all the dignity and beauty of its unclouded loveliness.

In this primal state of affairs, myriads of the race sinned and fell, lost all just claims on God, forfeited their rights to his kind regard, and fell under his wrath and curse. Still, the Divine Being was inclined to mercy, and of His own sovereign will he fashioned this world as a *vast moral hospital*, in which he graciously allowed

these fallen and guilty wretches their present state of probation, gave them mortal bodies corresponding to their material condition, instituted means for their redemption, and opened before them once more a door of hope and salvation.

On this state of being, therefore, these fallen spirits enter, having brought all the elements of their present depravity along with them from this previous state. This accounts fully for their sinful nature prior to thought, will, or action here, prior indeed to their birth even; explains their exposure to all the debasing influences of the world, to the tempting wiles of the arch-fiend and his allies, to infinite and hopeless retribution hereafter, justifies the Divine character throughout, and leaves it, in fact, unimpeached and unimpeachable.

The following are among the principal beneficial results of this system, as our author believes, and as he especially presents them. "1. We escape the constant and powerful tendency which exists under the old theory to give a superficial view of the great facts of man's depravity and ruin.

"2. We escape the constant and powerful tendency, to which I have before referred, to degrade the nature of free-agency itself, by supposing that such facts as occur in this world are the natural results of the best minds which God could make, in their normal state. 3. We do not ascribe to

God any facts at all at war with the highest principles of honor and right.

“4. We arrive at a sphere of existence in which we can carry up to the highest point our conceptions of the rectitude of the original constitutions of all new-created beings, and of God’s sincere good-will towards them, and sympathetic and benevolent treatment of them. 5. It presents the scriptural doctrine concerning a kingdom of fallen spirits in a light much more rational, intelligible, and impressive.” (pp. 228—233.)

With this entire re-adjustment, the wheels of the old theological ship roll together in entire harmony. The two great working forces of christianity, which have hitherto been so long in conflict, are reconciled. The worst problems are solved, the most fatal difficulties removed, and the sky, previously overspread “by a lurid and dreadful shade,” becomes serene again, and smiles in all its pristine beauty. The effect of this solution upon the mind and heart of our author, seems to have been of the most striking character. It “was as if, when I had been groping in some vast cathedral in the gloom of midnight, vainly striving to comprehend its parts and relations, suddenly before the vast arched window of the nave a glorious sun had suddenly burst forth, filling the whole structure with its radiance, and

showing in perfect harmony the proportions and beauties of its parts." (p. 191.)

In his fourth division, the Doctor gives a masterly "Historical outline" of this conflict from the earlier ages of the christian church.

Partially, yet sufficiently for his purpose, glancing at the speculations of Gnostics, Manicheans, Fatalists, &c., he ascends, as he terms it, "the spiritual mountain-top" vision, of Augustine, Bishop of Hyppo. He finds, in the labors of this father against Pelagianism, something very like the notion of pre-existence.

Augustine, it seems, could not defend the doctrine of inherent depravity against the powerful attacks of his opposers, except by maintaining that there had been a *forfeiture of rights* on the part of the creature *before birth*. In this "kind of pre-existence," which was "available only through the imagination,"—all "shadowy and baseless,"—the Western church rested for ages its defence of depravity, and our author finds a stepping-stone to his own more consistent theory. It is wholly unnecessary to the purpose of this review to follow him through the details of this history. It is sufficient here to say that he displays great research and fine powers of discrimination, but finally ends where he began, in showing that all the subtile speculations of orthodox writers, since Augustine, have failed to

approach even the solution of the difficulties involved. In whatever form they have presented the doctrine of human depravity, they have come in direct contact with the honor and rectitude of the Supreme Being. Involved in the meshes of this net-work of contradictions, "some of the best of men," he says, "have ascribed to God, in these theories, acts more at war with the fundamental principles of equity and honor than have ever been imagined or performed by the most unjust, depraved, and corrupt of created minds." (p. 358.)

Unintentionally and even unconsciously, he confesses this has been done, some not having been fully aware of what their views really amounted to in this respect, and others perceiving the evil, but knowing no possible way to avoid it, are "exposed to an inconceivable amount of suffering." "They cannot see around them anything but a universe of terror and gloom, in the lurid light of which a just and honorable God cannot be seen, and in which the soul faints, and it seems better to die than live." (p. 359.)

The remainder of his remarkable volume is chiefly devoted to the explanation and defence of the theory of *pre-existence*, as he holds it. Several objections are stated and examined, especially the orthodox view of Rom. 5:12—21, and the suggestion of Dr. Woods, that this theory shifts the

position of the difficulty without fully removing it. Direct reasons are also offered in support of this new view, and its harmonious results and beneficial practical operations set forth with a great deal of clearness and force.

In offering the foregoing analysis, which I regarded as essential to a proper understanding of the review which I contemplate, and to that just conception of our author's position which will exhibit its full strength in outline, I trust that I have neither misapprehended him in any essential particular, or given a false view to any of the facts of the case which are material to his general course of argument. If I have done so, it has been inadvertently, and no one will regret it more than myself. Certainly, a misconception of his views hardly seems necessary. They are, for the most part, expressed with a clearness not common to works of so profound a character, and relieved by a great variety of pertinent and forcible illustration. For fear, however, that I may not have done them that full justice which even so brief an analysis ought to do, no less than because his volume contains many wholesome truths, I would earnestly recommend its attentive perusal to all especially who may attempt the examination of this review.

CHAPTER VI.

SUMMARY STATEMENT OF THE CASE.—THE PRESENT
COURSE EXPLAINED.

BEFORE entering on a direct examination of our author's theory of a pre-existent state, there are several previous considerations which I would not have escape recollection.

1. In the present prevailing system of orthodoxy, embracing all its phases and modifications, there is a real vital, substantial conflict. As its various features are now held, they are positively inconsistent and irreconcilable. They stand in direct and fatal hostility to each other, and act and react as forces wholly antagonistic. This fact is beyond all doubt. He who could attempt to raise a question of it, in the clear light of our author's proof, must have a spirit of daring equalled only by his utter want of logical perception.

2. It follows, then, that some mode of explanation hitherto untried must be adopted, or that

splendid and imposing system which has held almost exclusive possession of the Christian church for so many centuries, is deserving of universal reprobation, and must, as truth prevails, sink into speedy and hopeless ruins.

It seems to me beyond the reach of mortal minds to avoid this issue. After the most careful re-examination of the matter, as Dr. Beecher has presented it, I find this conviction continually deepening within me. Unless some new element which shall correspond to the notion of pre-existence in its results is brought into the theory, it must either be given up entirely as a system, or held with known and fatal inconsistencies staring its advocates in the face. What will his brethren do in this case? What can they do which will give them the least sign of relief or hope? Will they accept his solution of the matter? That they will generally agree to this, I cannot for a moment believe. There are too many obstacles in the way. His mode of explanation is not true, as I shall proceed to show in its proper place. And it would not answer to *all* the difficulties involved in the case, even if it were true. It would leave the Divine character equally as indefensible as it found it, as I shall also endeavor to prove by-and-by. I cannot think, therefore, that this view will be very extensively adopted. What possible resource is left them then? Will they dare to

attack his theory very openly and boldly on this account? It seems to me that our author has set an admirable trap for them here, for which they will hardly thank him, whether they are fool-hardy enough to fall into it or otherwise. Not that I would presume that he designed it as such, but it answers the purpose equally well. If they undertake the destruction of his theory publicly, then the difficulty which it is designed to alleviate, returns with all its crushing force upon their own heads. *If they reject his solution, they are morally bound to give a better one.*

True, if they disprove our author's theory, it may be thought that it only leaves them exactly where they were before. But this is not wholly true. He has not made the difficulty in itself any greater than it was previously, I allow, but he has revealed its hideous form and gigantic proportions and fatal character, the dreadful realities of which had probably never been conceived of by the common mind. So that, although they may perhaps find it no hard matter to refute his theory, there is still a work left for them to do, the magnitude of which they must by this time have become somewhat acquainted with. But, whatever course they may see fit to pursue in this respect, one thing is very evident—namely, that after they have disposed of his theory, if they ever do this, they will never be able to repair the

breaches which he has made in their own citadel, or stop the leaks which his shot have effected in the hull of the old ship of orthodox theology. No—plug it or patch it, or calk it as they will—it will carry the marks of his heavy ordnance as long as it exists. It can never wholly recover from his attack. It may float yet for a time on the waves of that public opinion which have buoyed it up so long, or it may be cast up a mighty wreck on the shores of time, a mournful but interesting spectacle for all heretics to gaze upon.

3. It may be asked here, perhaps, what proper cause I may have to participate in this discussion? It is really a question among brethren, and one which it may be said that I ought not to interfere with. It is enough to say, in answer, that although my own opinions are not made the subject of very extensive investigation or objection in the work under consideration, yet they are discussed to some extent, and directly involved throughout its whole course.

If I can succeed in showing that Dr. Beecher's solution of the problem fails; that the fatally conflicting forces referred to, are, therefore, left in all their former hostility and power, the way will be fully opened for another, and, as I regard it, the only effectual mode of reconciliation, namely, a system radically different in all its essential particulars from that now recognized as evangelical.

CHAPTER VII.

EXAMINATION OF THE EVIDENCES ADDUCED FOR PRE-EXISTENCE.—OBJECTIONS TO THE DOCTRINE.

IN alluding to the doctrine of pre-existence, heretofore, I have conveyed the impression that it was a *new* doctrine. It is so only, however, in the form which our author gives to it, and the use to which he puts it. The idea of some kind of pre-existence, has been held, feebly or otherwise, by some persons, for many ages past. It was a subject of somewhat frequent speculation in ancient times, and can be traced not only in heathen mythologies and pagan philosophies, but also in the vagaries of Origen, one of the prominent christian fathers. Julius Muller, in more modern times, it seems, has seriously attempted to bring it in to the support of orthodox theology, and our author's theory may, perhaps, be regarded as the perfecting of a system, of which he had done little more than suggest the possibility.

Sorely pressed, as it appears, from similar causes to those which have driven our author into its full

adoption, Muller found something like this resource necessary. Taking it up in a little different manner, and carrying it not quite so far, he yet seemed to find some degree of relief in it from the sad pressure of the difficulties involved in his views of depravity. He speaks of it rather as a plausible hypothesis, however, than as an established fact; and it is not unworthy of notice here, that both he and Dr. Beecher find its principal proof *in its alleged necessity* as a means of reconciling other dogmas with the acknowledged attributes and character of God.

In approaching a critical examination of the claims of this doctrine, I cannot but feel that there
a) is some little difficulty in reaching it directly with anything like tangible proof. Its very character
b) is such as to place it without the pale of ordinary evidence. It would be a difficult thing to establish it fully even if it were true, not only because
c) it does not pretend to a clear revelation in the scriptures, but because it is beyond the reach of other proof except that which is purely *inferential*.
d) We have no consciousness or memory which lays hold of it, nor has it facts or phenomena for the senses. Reason and observation do not seem to
e) lead to it, except remotely and indirectly. In fact, at a first glance, it appears very much to my mind as a dream or vision would. It may be true, and it may not be. Who knows, or who can positively

tell us? Let us suppose that the theory of the famous Col. Symes was revived and put forth again; that it was claimed that the earth is as hollow as an egg-shell; that a vast hole has been broken into its crust at the north pole; that the Arctic waters flow in there, and spread themselves over its interior surface very much as they do over its exterior; that vessels could pass in there and discoveries by navigation be carried on as they are among us here; how could one prove easily that it was so, or that it was not so? Certainly it would seem to be difficult without the testimony of personal observation. Even if it were urged that there was no other possible mode of accounting for the whereabouts of Sir John Franklin; that he must have had some such mode of exit, or traces of him would surely have been discovered, and that he is now doubtless pursuing his explorations in the unknown regions of the earth's centre; still it would be regarded as merely a possible hypothesis, nothing more. So it is, in some respects, with our author's theory of a pre-existence. It has not the ludicrous features of the illustration, but it seems to bear a little resemblance to it in this one particular—which is all that the figure aims at showing—namely, the difficulty of reaching it with direct and tangible evidence either *pro* or *con*.

I will not, however, do either myself or Doctor

Beecher the injustice of begging the question, or attempt to conceal whatever of real proof he has offered in its favor. With his usual frankness, he seems to more than intimate that there is no great amount of direct evidence in its support, which can be drawn either from revelation, reason or experience.

Indeed, his great central proof, and the only one worthy of consideration, that out from which all others seems to spring, or into which they may be resolved, *is found in its alleged* NECESSITY. His argument is briefly this: The great leading features of orthodox theology are *true*. But there is a *conflict* among them. This theory is *essential* to their harmony. It will *perfectly* harmonize them. *Therefore it is true*. Thus its whole proof is based entirely on its alleged necessity as a means of reconciling other truths.

For the purpose of a better arrangement of my own thoughts, I prefer to waive the consideration of this argument until I come to treat upon the facts of human depravity. Its validity, as will be readily seen, rests entirely on the assumption that the common view of this subject is correct. If, in its full and fair examination, it should appear that there was really no such state of things at present, or had ever been, as would absolutely conflict with the principles of honor and right in God, then, of course, there is no necessity for such a theory as

our author introduces, and, therefore, according to his own admission, no proof of its reality. All this I apprehend can be sufficiently shown to minds not too much prejudiced, or too immovably fixed in other preconceived opinions. I think it will be seen that the common views of depravity, taken in their fullest extent, as embracing its origin, amount, and fancied infinite consequences, are an entire misapprehension of the facts of the case,—that they have no sufficient support either in reason, or observation, or experience, or the bible. And if this should really be found to be the case, which for the present I will assume, then all the vestiges of real proof which our author offers of the fact of pre-existence, will be taken away, and the theory must fall by its own weight, though it be lighter than the stuff which dreams are made of.

Postponing, then, for the present, this main ground of argument, I will proceed to offer some suggestions which appear to me as fatal to the claims of our author's theory.

1. In the first place, the bible does not reveal it. If it were true, and a truth of such immense magnitude and importance as our author supposes, it should have been revealed. The single consideration, therefore, that the entire volume of revelation fails to even recognize it in any way, ought to be regarded as its sufficient refutation.

In treating of its scriptural relation, Dr. Beecher,

with his usual candor, concedes that it is nowhere taught in the holy scriptures, but simply claims that the bible does not "confine us, by express verbal revelation, to any particular theory on the subject." In fact, although he occupies nearly one hundred pages of his book chiefly with exegesis and biblical criticism, all which he will really claim as the result of it is, that there is no express contradiction of his theory to be found in it.

But suppose that there is not, which I am by no means willing to admit, except for the present argument, does it follow that we are at liberty, therefore, to establish it as an essential part of christianity?

I can very well conceive how many minor and comparatively unimportant truths connected with religion should be left to the discovery of human reason. But can we rationally suppose that a *fundamental tenet* would be left to so doubtful a source of development?

I hope that this question will be carefully considered in all its bearings. In the exercise of common reason, are we justified in believing that a reality so vast and momentous—one involving so very deeply the foundations of our religion; nay, more, one without the aid of which all that is revealed cannot be explained, or understood, or defended—would be left (without a single hint or token of recognition in all the bible) to the doubt-

ful discovery of the human intellect after long centuries of spiritual darkness and strife had passed away? Is this, in any light, a rational supposition?

I ask particular attention to the fact, that this is not like many other religious opinions, which may be revealed or not, believed or rejected, without affecting seriously the general body of revealed truth. It is, on the contrary, according to our author's view of it, a vital portion, a fundamental part; nay, the very keystone of the arch of our religion, without which it would tumble in fragments. It is either all this, or it is nothing. The use which he makes of it establishes this fully. Its entire basis, its proof, he finds in its *necessity*. And if it be *necessary* to our religion, either for explanation or defence, then it should have been distinctly recognized in the holy scriptures, or have appealed to us intuitively, or have been so open and plain to the reason, as to have been seen and acknowledged at once by men generally. It is not claimed to be of this character. It is not even pretended that it forces itself upon the mind readily and necessarily, or that the slightest intimation of its reality is given in any of the Divine writings.

Is not this fact inexplicable then, in view of its truth? If real, why was it not in the bible? What is the object of a *revelation*? Not, I admit, to make known all truth, nor indeed to de-

velop all religious truth, even; but evidently to reveal so much as will make itself intelligible. At least, it seems but fair to suppose that every thing essential to its proper understanding on our part, if not otherwise clearly apparent, would be in some way embraced or implied in it.

To suppose that any feature, without which its teachings could be neither understood or defended, is wholly omitted, and no possible clue given to put us on the track of its discovery, is to suppose that the bible, in reality, is no revelation. It would imply that it was wholly unintelligible of itself; that it has stood before the world for some thousands of years, a moral enigma, a profound mystery, a problem which no human mind could solve. It will be observed that this is radically different from a question of interpretation merely. Such questions must be expected to arise often. They spring from the necessary ambiguity of language, customs, &c., and are measurably inseparable from a written or verbal revelation. Any revelation of this kind must come through the medium of oral or written language, and be subject, in this respect, to the necessary imperfections of this medium. But this mode of relief is not allowed us in the case under consideration. It is not a question of interpretation, and cannot be disposed of in this manner. The truth is, it is not revealed

at all. It is, if true, fundamental, necessary ; and if so, why was it not revealed ?

This is the true question.

Perhaps it will be said, as our author seems to intimate rather incidentally, that a knowledge of this previous state was purposely kept from us to realize more fully the Divine intentions regarding the present state. (p. 530.) But if this be really so, then it only complicates the difficulty, instead of removing it. For why, on the truth of this supposition, was it left open to possible discovery ? Why was it not sealed up in impenetrable concealment ? And if, under these circumstances, our author had stumbled upon its hiding-place, in groping amidst the darkness of a gloomy and contradictory theology, why defeat what was evidently a Divine intention by giving it forth to the world on the lightning wings of the press ? Why did he not bury it in the solitude of his own thoughts ? Which horn of the dilemma shall be taken in this case ? It must be confessed that either looks somewhat dangerous, as though he who rushed upon it might find himself in trouble. The doctrine of pre-existence is chosen to get us out of difficulty. This is its entire recommendation. But it looks, thus far, much more like getting us into difficulty than out of it.

How, then, is this consideration to be met ? The bible pretends to be *a revelation*, in the full and

proper sense of the term. It professes to *reveal* a religion to us; to give us a tolerably intelligent account of the matter, or, at least, to make itself sufficiently plain to the mind of a candid and diligent examiner. But if I understand Dr. Beecher, this is all a mournful mistake. Christ affirmed to Pilate that to this end he was born, viz: that he might bear witness to the *truth*; and yet he has given us only its fragments, disjointed and broken, reserving the very features most essential to give it form, comeliness and value. An eminent naturalist, receiving a collection of fossil remains, say the bones of a mastodon, may find little difficulty in their proper arrangement, even if important parts are wanting. He can manufacture a wooden head or leg if necessary, for his knowledge of organic structures enables him to supply easily any defective portions. But who would think of sending such a collection to an individual comparatively ignorant, where the whole spinal column was wanting, the very portion without which the remainder would be little more intelligible than a handful of crooked sticks? Has our Divine Master treated his spiritually benighted children in this way?

Paul said that he had not shunned to declare all the counsel of God. Did he believe that any vitally important feature had been kept hidden from him?—a feature without which all the remainder

was little better than an assemblage of contradictions? Must we not of necessity assume that all the really vital and essential features of christianity, except such as are intuitive, or open to the easy grasp of the common mind, are sufficiently made known in the bible, so that it actually realizes the Protestant boast, in being a "sufficient rule of faith and practice?" Does not its claim to our belief seem to imply all this? For why should it speak to us, as it plainly does, demanding faith in its annunciations, if it has merely propounded to us a riddle and thrown away the key?

In what a condition, then, does our author's theory place the bible, in this respect. Here we are represented as in a great *moral hospital*, sick, diseased, dying. And yet the radical causes of our illness are wholly unknown to us. They were unknown even to our Great Physician. At least he was never known to intimate them to any one, or leave directions for our spiritual treatment which seem to have had them in view.

And I cannot avoid the dreadful conclusion, on the truth of our author's theory, a conclusion which I must believe would make skeptics and infidels of a great share of those who were driven to adopt it, that the bible offers us, in its most prominent teachings, an inexplicable problem, that ever since the days of its inspired writers it has stood looking down upon the world, like the old

But
Does the
Bible
really
contain
the
key
to
the
problem?

But it is
not the
key to the
problem
of the
ages.

Sphynx of Egypt, with no one able to solve its mystery, or read the cabalistic words which are inscribed upon its brow.

Now I cannot so regard the scriptures. This view is too repugnant to my reason, and makes, by far, too great a demand on my credulity. And though I do not regard Christ and his apostles as attempting to teach us in a manner strictly systematic, by any means, yet I do and must believe that they have given us all the essentials, out of which a fair and perfect structure may be erected.

Furthermore; I can hardly admit the Doctor's statement, (p. 364) that although he has not direct biblical authority for his theory, yet that it is proved by the same mode of argumentation which we use to prove the existence of a God, or the authenticity of the bible, which are also essential and important truths. I admit that these truths are necessary and fundamental; that they lie at the very basis of revealed truth. But still there is not strictly a similarity, in this respect, between these and the theory under consideration. The analogy fails in the very point where we ought to find it most strikingly manifest. Thus, I have assumed that any truth of a necessary or fundamental character, in religion, should be revealed, unless it was intuitive, or of such a nature as to readily and easily become apparent to the common mind.

Now the fact of a Divine existence is plainly a

truth of this character. It is intuitive with all men. All nations and races of men, however ignorant or unenlightened in other respects, cherish something like this conviction. Then, too, the bible not only everywhere assumes the fact of such a being, and recognizes its reality, but even declares his existence. To the old prophets God says, "*I am*," and the gospel tells us that "*he is*," as well as "a rewarder of those who diligently seek him."

So, too, in regard to the authenticity of the bible. Certain great facts are laid open to the senses, and certain truths and principles appeal in such a way to the spiritual eye or perception, that a recognition of its Divine origin becomes easy and apparent to most minds. It should be remembered also in this case, that, from the very nature of the fact itself, its proof must come, if at all, from some such source. The evidences of a revelation are of necessity confined to these channels. They must be received through the reason, the intuitions, the moral perceptions, and the senses. To reveal these involves an absurdity, for the revelation must be authenticated before it can become proof.

Now the theory of a pre-existence is not of the character of either of the foregoing. As I have already suggested, the analogy seems to fail at the very point where alone it could aid our author's

argument. It is not, like the former of these, an intuitive suggestion forcing itself upon the common mind, nor like the latter, of such a nature as to shut it out from the legitimate sphere or province of revelation. On the contrary, its character is such as to render it apparently a fit and proper subject for express revelation, inasmuch as it is an essential portion of religion, and exceedingly difficult of discovery in any other way, as its history has fully shown.

That God in his wise providence should have left the system of Newtonian philosophy to be developed by merely human intelligence, seems all right and proper enough. And the same may be said in regard to any other ordinary science or philosophy. But that he should have left to the doubtful attainment of the human mind, through long centuries of darkness, a fundamental truth of our religion,—a truth NECESSARY to the proper understanding of what is revealed, and without which the revealed facts are contradictory and absurd; not only leaving our minds a prey to the most distressing anxieties and torturing perplexities, but throwing the darkest shadows across His own character, making Him appear to our thoughts as a monster, when He ought to appear as a Father: this, I confess, is asking too much of ordinary credulity, and, although I should like

to accommodate a friend in believing all I could of what he presented me, yet this is farther than I can go in loyalty to my own reason and conscience. The hypothesis makes difficulties rather than helps to remove them.

CHAPTER VIII.

FARTHER OBJECTIONS TO THIS THEORY.—THE SCRIPTURES AGAINST IT.—FACTS OF PHILOSOPHY AGAINST IT.

IN treating of the scriptural relations of the doctrine of pre-existence thus far, I have merely taken into the account the conceded fact that the bible does not teach it; admitting, for the sake of argument, also, that it was nowhere expressly contradicted in its pages. I must now proceed to withdraw this concession, as I intimated at the time that I should. I find it impossible to accede to the Doctor's claim, that the bible does not foreclose inquiry here, but leaves the question fairly open to other evidence. To my apprehension, it does plainly cut off such a resort by teaching us that human existence commences with the present state of being. Our author's labored exposition of the fifth chapter of Romans, even granting all that he can claim for it, is merely negative so far as my position is concerned. Nay, it rather helps it than otherwise. For while he

has clearly shown that it cannot form the basis of the popular orthodox doctrine of a *fall in Adam*, as it is generally supposed to do,—a thankless work so far as his brethren are concerned, and one which will yet give them much trouble,—he still leaves it in harmony with the general view which I shall take upon the subject of human depravity.

It is very evident, however, that he is so intent on the purpose of cutting off his orthodox opponents from their only safe retreat in the case, that he has entirely overlooked the real significance of many other important declarations of the Divine word—declarations which appear to weigh fatally against his theory. True, he alludes to most of the scriptures which I am about to refer to, though it should be borne in mind that this is done from the orthodox stand-point, and seems mainly designed to answer real or anticipated objections from his own brethren. His scriptural criticisms here are by no means satisfactory.

Let us look somewhat carefully into the Mosaic account as it is found in Genesis. It will be seen, I think, that the bible treats this matter very much as it does any other well known and generally admitted fact, about which it would hardly be expected that any one would raise a question. It seems to take it for granted that the entrance of man on this state of being was really the commencement of his existence. It does more than

this; it speaks of the fact as though man was at that time a *new creation*. Is not this the clear statement of the first chapter of Genesis? Its simple account is, that "*In the beginning* God created the heaven and the earth," and beast, and bird, and fish, and insect, and reptile, and, finally, *man*. And I cannot shake off the conviction that all this is related in such a manner as to forbid the thought that any of these things had ever existed before. This clear implication appears to run through the whole history. The *man* was just as fully a new-created being as anything else which the account embraces. Such is the necessary impression which it forces upon the mind.

After the creation of the earth and its inferior inhabitants, let it be remembered, the history tells us that "God **CREATED** man in his own image." Why does our author, in alluding to this matter, turn to the next chapter and refer chiefly to the account of the mere process of conferring animal life? It will not be presumed by any one that there is proof *here* of the commencement of the *spirit's* existence. But in the former account, it is expressly affirmed that the spirit, or that portion of man which was formed in *God's image*—which I conclude must be his spirit, as nothing else belonging to his personality will conform to the description—was then and there **CREATED**. Now what other meaning can be attached to this word,

than its primary and most common one—viz.: “to bring into being from nothing—to *cause to exist*?” How, then, could it be said of man, at that time, that God *created* him if he had really been created long ages previously? If the history had merely embraced what is recorded in the second chapter, concerning the formation of the body from the dust of the ground, and the bestowment of animal life by breathing in its nostrils, or had it simply stated that God caused man to exist on the earth, I could easily apprehend in that case the *possibility* of his pre-existence, but I cannot conceive of this possibility now, as the facts are, without doing the most gross violence to the language in • Gen. 1:27. Indeed the most evident meaning of this declaration must be flatly contradicted if the theory under consideration is once admitted.

Let it be remarked here, that so very evident and forcible is the import of this simple declaration, that Dr. Beecher himself seems hardly willing to encounter it. He appears inclined to admit its full force, so far as the case of Adam is concerned, and contents himself with the claim that if this account really proves Adam to have been a new-created being, it does not follow therefore that the rest of mankind are! So far as aught in the history goes to show, *they* may be presumed, he says, to have been previously *fallen spirits*! This is really too bad. It is one of the

very few instances in his whole volume, in which he appears in a light unworthy of his usually candid and logical mind. If he allows himself calm reflection upon the matter, he will not be satisfied with it himself. He will perceive that it is really an evasion of the legitimate force of the Mosaic statement.

He glides from this point very quietly in the following terms: "Even in the case of Adam, the *creation* of his *spirit* is not asserted in the words 'God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life,' but merely the gift of natural life—that which unites spirit and body." (p. 530.)

But this is not the question. The true question is, what is that spoken of in Gen. 1 : 27, which was *created* in *God's image*? Surely not this *vital* principle, the mere principle of animal life, breathed into the body, for this perishes when the body dies. Nor could it have been the mortal body made of the dust of the earth. It must have been the *spirit*. And our author's unqualified declaration, that God did *not* create Adam's spirit at that time, is wholly unwarranted. What did He create in His own image if not Adam's spirit? Passing from the historical account in Genesis, which seems totally inconsistent with the idea of a pre-existent state for man, we find Paul, in 1 Cor. 15th chapter, speaking of Adam as the *first* man, just as though none others had ever

previously existed ; and, taking into consideration, as his words plainly imply that he did, all which he knew or believed concerning the whole range of human existence from the beginning, he holds the following plain, simple, and conclusive language : “ There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. And so it is written : the first man, Adam, was made a living soul ; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. Howbeit,” he adds, “ that was not *first* which is *spiritual*, but *that which is natural* ; and AFTERWARD that which is spiritual.”

Two facts appear to lie on the very face of this declaration. *First* : There are but two states of being for man, or that belong to his existence—namely, “ the natural,” “ the earthly,” the present state ; and “ the spiritual,” “ the heavenly,” the future, immortal state. *Secondly* : The former precedes the latter—the *natural* is prior in point of time to the *spiritual*. True, there is no explicit declaration here that one or a thousand states of spiritual being had *not* preceded all this ; nor does it attempt to contradict formally any other hypothesis to which our fancy might give birth here. It was not thought necessary, I presume, in a statement of facts to append explicit contradictions to every conceivable form of speculation. It was enough for the writer to give the facts clearly and distinctly ; and the way in which

Paul has done this in the case before us, appears wholly inconsistent with the notion of a pre-existent state.

Leaving the scriptural argument for the present here, let me suggest a very difficult encounter which this notion of a pre-existence must meet with in some of the most generally accepted facts of philosophy. It is usually supposed that all the essential elements of one's identity must exist in order to continued personality. For example: if these elements are really broken up and destroyed in *me*, then my personal being is at an end. The being which may be made to succeed me, though occupying my position and called by my name, is not really and truly *me*. It is just as essentially another being as though I had never existed. It is a being with whom *I* have no necessary connection, and one whose existence can by no possibility ever become so linked to mine as to render them one and the same. So far as I know, no fact in philosophy is better established or more generally admitted than this. It is on this ground chiefly that we are accustomed to argue the vital and intimate connection of the present and the future life.

Dr. H. Ballou, in a very searching and profound article on the condition of men hereafter, develops this principle very clearly.

"Suppose," says he, "that after having expa-

tiated on the glories of the universal salvation which is to be realized in the next world, I find it convenient, for the sake of carrying out some favorite side-notion of mine, to contend that our personality may there cease—that our souls, or spirits, may there perhaps be absorbed in God, so that we shall no more exist with self-consciousness, nor as individuals. In this case, it is clear that I virtually retract all I had said of our future salvation, and of the blessedness of the prospect; since, upon these grounds, those absorbed spirits will no longer be ours, any more than is the puff of breath which we exhaled into the all-surrounding atmosphere a year ago. And of what possible consequence will it be to us whether they are to fare well or ill after they shall have ceased to be ours, and after we shall have ceased to exist as creatures, to know or to feel, or to be any way interested in the event? If I, as a person, am to be utterly extinct when I die, and my soul is to be resolved into some other being, it is no concern of mine what becomes of it *then*; and to bid me exult in the glorious prospect is nonsense, if not mockery. It is easy to see,” he adds, “that this is simply the doctrine of annihilation, under cover of a better sounding name.”

There must be self-consciousness hereafter, in order to our continued identity. We must have the same full cognition there of the present state

that we have to-day of the condition of yesterday. And whatever is interposed to wholly destroy this must of necessity terminate our personal existence. We shall no longer exist, though other beings may.

“If our memory and our present consciousness are to perish utterly at death, and all the past become as a blank annihilation—if, when we awaken in eternity, it shall appear to us as though we were first created at that moment, what difference is it to us, in this life, whether it be said that we are the ones who are then to exist again, or that we are to be annihilated, and that some new species is then to take our place? To ourselves, death will seem to be the last of us.”

I cannot wholly agree with Dr. Ballou in saying, as he proceeds to, that “God *may* know” that our spirits in this case will be the same there as those here existing, nor can I exactly understand why he concedes this possibility, since he adds that it would be the idlest verbiage to preach to us such an immortality.

Under the circumstances supposed, I can conceive of the possibility of our spirits being recognized there by the Supreme Being as the same of those which now exist here, only in this sense—namely, that the *substances* constituting our spirits here are re-constructed in new and different forms there, and they may therefore be termed the same. Still, so far as the personality is concerned, they

are not the same, and it is, to the fullest extent, the extinction of the previous being. There is, and can be, no rational and intelligible idea of an immortality for *me* from which all self-consciousness is utterly excluded. If I do not carry all the necessary elements of my identity along with me into the future state, so that I can recognize there that I am essentially the same being who has existed here, very much as my self-consciousness to-day takes cognizance of my being of yesterday, then there is an end to my personality, or to all which constitutes *me*. New creatures may follow—they may be called me, or by my name, or anything else, it matters not. *I* have nothing to do with *them*—*they* have nothing to do with *me*.

They can, none of them, by any conceivable hocus-pocus, become *me*, any more than I can become Paul or Peter, or Jesus, or the first child born here on earth after I die.

Now this whole course of reasoning applies equally well to the notion of a pre-existence. There may have been spiritual existences previous to our mortal existence; doubtless there was; but what have these to do with us here? They and we are not identical. So that even if Dr. Beecher could succeed in proving that God had created a race of spiritual beings prior to human life here, and that some of them sinned and fell, how is he to link their personality to ours so as to make them

actually *us*? The thing seems to be philosophically impossible. Granted, that there have been fallen angels before I was born. What then? I am not properly one of them unless my self-consciousness can lay hold of the fact. And to say that I am really the same being as one of them, is to thoroughly unsettle all our established ideas of psychological philosophy in regard to the matter. It may just as fairly, and with equal propriety, so far as I can discover, be claimed that I am now the very same person as the Moses of ancient times, or the same identical individual as Isaiah, or David, or Noah, or Adam.

Why not, if the principle which supposes our author's theory possible, can only be maintained? Or, worse still, how do we know, or how can we know, in case this principle is allowed, that we are not the very same persons as Cain, and Herod, and Judas, and Nero, and Capt. Kidd? Who can say, on this hypothesis, that the spirits of some of the vilest of the world's criminals, in ages past, are not now tenants of our own bodies, and the very beings we call ourselves?

Really, it would seem that, after all, we may very possibly wake up by-and-by, and find out that we are those same individuals, the sole authors of all their crimes, and doomed to suffer the penalty of them! Who knows? Who could offer the first reason to show that it is *not so*, in

case the philosophy of our author's theory is sound? The truth is, we have then no longer any laws of personality on which we can rely. We have no longer any right to say who we are, or what we are, or whether our souls are our own or somebody's else!

The subject may seem too serious for pleasantry, but I must confess that, looking at the philosophy of the Doctor's theory in regard to a continuance of personality beyond the reach of self-consciousness or memory, or any faculty which can take cognizance of the fact, I have been greatly tempted to laugh at it. In view of it, we may be ourselves, or we may be somebody else. It is very doubtful which. No one can certainly tell. We *may* be beings who lived thousands or millions of years ago, or, what appears much more likely to my mind, the theory which supposes that such things are *possible*, may itself be, in reality, merely the creature of the imagination. With all due respect for our author, which I sincerely feel, I must think that it is so. His notion of a pre-existence for *us*, is to me a mere dream.

I am truly anxious in regard to his entire sanity upon this subject. Is he not a little crazed in reference to it? Certainly the thought is no very extravagant one. His religion has driven to madness many a good man before him. Its truly awful difficulties, its horrible problems, which he

even confesses have heretofore pressed him to almost the verge of despair, to a state in which it seemed better to die than to live, these things must have fairly shaken the balance of his noble intellect. They have blinded the usually keen eye of his reason. They have hurled confusion among his thoughts. He "sees men as though they were trees walking." Visions flit before him as tangible forms. Dreams take the hue and shape of sober realities, and like poor king Lear, he is battling with all his soul the phantoms of a diseased imagination.

Let us indulge the hope that he will finally see clearer and better than he appears to now; that dogmas which can only be maintained or harmonized at the sacrifice of either the moral sentiments or the reason, will be wholly remodeled or given up, and that in the light of another and more thorough examination, he will find occasion to readjust his adjustment, and explain his explanation.

CHAPTER IX.

THE BASIS OF THE CLAIMS OF THIS THEORY.

THE arguments already adduced, both from the bible and philosophy, appear to bear directly and with much force against the possibility of the theory under consideration. How far they do really answer this end, or whether there is some method by which it may still be maintained, in spite of them, must be left to the investigation and decision of the reader's own thoughts.

It is very necessary, however, to the correctness of this decision, that several considerations should be taken into the account, which, although they may not appear to present themselves in such bold and direct opposition to it, do nevertheless indirectly seem to throw such obstacles in its way as are fatal to its claims as a true theory. It is mercifully designed as a system or plan of *relief*, but is far from attaining the legitimate ends of such a system. Its claims to our favorable regard are based wholly on its assumed virtues in this respect. It was instituted as a regulator, or a balance-wheel,

or a rudder to the ill-arranged or badly-working theological vessel. It was to readjust conflicting forces, put the whole mechanism in order, and start the old ship on her true and proper course.

Its boasted powers, in these respects, its ability to introduce harmony where there seemed to be little but conflict, and satisfy the reason while it reconciled the outraged moral feelings, these are offered as its principal recommendations. These are indeed the assumed proofs of its truth. *It ought therefore to work well.* To justify such claims it should really effect much in this manner. True, I would not ask too much of it. I would not require that it should work out of its legitimate and proper sphere. I would not demand that it should solve every problem which could be started, or clear up every difficulty connected with the whole field of theology. No plan of human device could do this.

But I do feel justified in asking that it shall give some clue to the solution of its own peculiar difficulties ; that it shall really help to clear up some of the principal ones ; that the ship shall work better with it than without it, and especially that it shall not cause more evil than it cures. How is the fact ? What are its defects as a practical working system ?

These, I can but believe, will be found too numerous and aggravated to allow of its adoption.

As Rev. Mr. Ellis very properly remarks in regard to it, "Dr. Beecher's theory may relieve the system of orthodoxy, *but it does not relieve the human mind*. This we regard as a fatal objection."* It cannot be denied that a serious alarm for the *Divine reputation* was the ruling motive which impelled our author to his work. A zealous regard for the honor of God; a fine sense of his moral perfections, what is due to them, and may be properly claimed of them; a deep reverence for His character, which would be pained and shocked by the slightest reproach cast upon it; a deep and bitter conviction that God had been wronged most foully, though unintentionally; that his name had been subjected to scorn and derision, wholly undeservedly, by the false position in which certain doctrines were held and advocated; these were the deeply and powerfully working causes which stimulated him to this great effort. The great paramount purpose of the author was to *vindicate the Divine character*. This object, in itself a noble and highly praiseworthy one, gleams all along the entire track of his argument. Traces of it are found upon almost every page. And I feel very sure that I should be doing him the greatest injustice in supposing that he would for one moment

* Christian Examiner, Nov. 1853. An admirable analysis of the work of Dr. Beecher, with some very keen, but candid and good-tempered criticism on it.

consent to sacrifice this high purpose to any minor consideration whatever.

The explanation of some few conflicting dogmas in theology merely—dogmas which neither compromise or involve the Divine reputation in any way—may be all well enough in its place. But nothing of this kind has prevailed with him here. No, these would have been regarded as entirely too unimportant. The common view of depravity might be held in the form which Augustine gave it, or as Andover has modified it. Men might be supposed to have a sinful nature, or only a nature which would inevitably lead to sin; and like shades of diversity might have prevailed on a thousand other points, without seriously disturbing him, if this were really all. But when it was once clearly visible that the Divine honor and justice were at stake; that the character and attributes of God were fatally involved in these subjects, then they immediately become questions of the highest possible magnitude. As touching the perfections of God they were invested with almost infinite importance. And that our author so regarded it, and that in this fact he found the mighty force which impelled him to his work, is plainly evident from his own language. “I have written as I have, because I have felt in my inmost soul, and with deep and long-continued sorrow, that He is deeply dishonored, and the

energies of His kingdom on earth fatally paralyzed by the basis on which his own church has placed his greatest and most glorious work, the divine work of redeeming love. I have believed and therefore have I spoken. If it were seen to be so, then there would be but one response from every true child of God. If *His* honor is at stake, all else must give way. What are creeds, institutions, or denominations, in comparison with him for whose honor they are professedly made, and for whom, alone, they avow a desire to exist?"

This same spirit, essentially, is everywhere manifest, throughout his whole volume. It is, evidently, a fatal objection to any view, in his mind, that it assails violently, or is really inconsistent with, the rectitude of the Supreme Being. This fact I wish to have carefully borne in mind in the suggestions which I am about to offer, because it will form a correct test by which to judge of the character and operations of his own theory. If it fails when tried by this rule, the result is not one of prophecy or speculation. For inasmuch as its chief object is to vindicate the Divine character, its ruin is final and hopeless if it still leaves that character under serious impeachment. It is not enough that it shall claim to be an improvement, in this respect, on former views. It cannot be maintained simply on the ground that it has less defects here than they. No, if true, it must do

more than merely wipe a few stains from the sullied reputation of God, leaving others equally dark and disgraceful to still disfigure it. It must lift the great burthen of reproach which now rests upon him. It must show how that he has been honorable, and just, and right, and good in all his direct dealings with us, and that in no case has he positively violated these divine principles. For what kind of a vindication would that be which merely claimed that God was just and good YESTERDAY, but admitted that he was not so TO-DAY?

CHAPTER X.

PRINCIPLES OF HONOR AND RIGHT RECALLED.

BEFORE proceeding to bring certain considerations into view, which appear to bear indirectly and powerfully against the *efficiency* of our author's system, I would recall to the reader's mind his strong and clear development of the moral principles of honor and right, as they exist in the Divine character, and of the just and proper claims of all men on God for their full and free exercise in his administration. (An allusion will be found to them in chapters II. and III. of this volume.) They may be summed up briefly thus: 1. Honor, justice, right, goodness, &c.—These are principles intuitively perceived by all men. Even the unconverted heathen, who are without the revealed word, have and acknowledge them. Dr. Alexander says, "that God, as a moral governor, has incorporated the elements of his law into our very constitution." (Dr. Beecher, p. 20.) "He with great earnestness maintains," says Dr. Beecher, "that the intuitive perceptions of conscience" are

“independent of every doctrine of theology, even the greatest.” (p. 21.) Our author adds, that God “has so made their minds, that a standard of judgment is disclosed by their natural and intuitive perceptions and convictions of honor and right. Indeed, so clear is the case, that leading commentators of all schools coincide in this interpretation.” (p. 22.)

2. These intuitions of ours, in regard to these great moral principles, are wholly reliable and trustworthy. They are of Divine origin, and of the highest conceivable authority. “God himself declares that the intuitive perceptions of the human mind, as to honor and right, are a revelation from the creator,—a divine law of supreme and binding authority.” (p. 26.) “Whatever these principles are, their authority is supreme. No considerations of mere expediency or policy, whether individual or general, if opposed to them, ought to have any force, nor with God can they have any force.” (p. 27.)

3. These principles are common to God and to men. This would be necessarily inferred from the foregoing statements. There can be but *one kind* of justice, or goodness, or rectitude, so far as we can conceive, and these principles must be essentially the same in their nature whenever applied. The only difference between them, as they exist in our thoughts and in the Divine

nature, is simply that, in the former, they may be somewhat imperfect, while in the latter they exist in infinite perfection. The essential nature of the principles themselves must be the same in him and in us. "I admit," says Dr. Beecher, "that few have dared openly to deny that there are among men such intuitive principles of honor and right; but, nevertheless, some, when pressed by their application to certain alleged acts of God, have denied that they are common alike to God and to man, and alike binding on both. Concerning this view, I would say, with emphasis, that it is a most unfounded and pernicious position. It is unfounded; for who has ever adduced, or can adduce, any evidence of its truth? It is most pernicious; for it destroys that which Tholuck so impressively calls 'the bond of relationship between God and man.' Indeed it would subvert the very foundations of the government of God. How could we see or adore the glories of the divine character—how could we ever enter into rational and joyful communion with God, if he had so made our minds that our intuitive judgments of honor and right were, or could be, opposed to his own? How could we ever correctly judge of the honor or rectitude of his conduct, if the standard of honor and rectitude revealed by him in the structure of our minds, did not agree with his own standard on the same

points? * * * * We must therefore of necessity assume, not only that there are judgments concerning honor and right which God has made the human mind to form with intuitive certainty, but that they are *common to God and to man.*" (pp. 26, 27.)

These, then, are principles of the Divine nature—attributes of the Divine mind. In all their infinite purity and fullness, they dwell in Him, actuate, and guide Him, and constitute necessary elements of his perfections.

4. God will never violate these principles himself. This proposition seems too evident to require either proof or explanation. No possible statement could be made which would demand the assent of our reason more imperatively, or receive it more unhesitatingly if considered in itself alone, or without reference to its bearing on favorite ideas. And still, such is the blinding force of prejudice, and the tenacity with which venerated dogmas are sometimes held, and such is the sharp conflict existing between this statement and certain orthodox notions, as will be seen, that a few words in confirmation of the proposition may not be wholly useless. "The principles of honor and right require of God, inasmuch as he demands of his creatures that they do what is right, and inasmuch as this demand is founded in the nature of things, that he should not himself confound the

distinction between right and wrong." (p. 34.) Again: "The laws of honor and of right are of God; nor has he ever violated them, nor will he." (p. 452.) Well may the Doctor add here, that "this is the premise of an argument powerful enough to revolutionize nations and churches, and to shake a world."

Had he any foresight here of the use to which heretics would put this tremendous piece of moral ordnance? Did he know that he was erecting a mighty battery that would finally sweep the system of orthodoxy from the face of the earth? Or, like honest Antonio the alchymist, did he mingle the subtle elements in his crucible, all unknowing that in their explosion his own system would be rent in fragments?

5. No declaration of the revealed word must be so understood or interpreted as to openly or visibly conflict with these principles. If they are, as our author maintains with such invincible logic, a revelation of themselves, directly from heaven,—God's voice speaking through the soul or moral being,—then, of course, no verbal revelation from the same source could be expected to contradict them.

I have already quoted from Dr. Beecher (p. 20) on this point. (See chap. II.) He says that "there have been, and still are, those who think so much more of the verbal revelations of God than of any

other, that they almost overlook the fact that the foundations of all possible knowledge have been laid by God in the consciousness and the intuitive perceptions of the mind itself. Forgetful of this fact, they have often, by unfounded interpretations of scripture, done violence to the mind, and overruled the decisions made by God himself through it, and then sought shelter in faith and mystery.

No scriptural interpretation, then, must be regarded as sound which will not harmonize with these eternal and immutable principles.

6. These principles are in importance paramount to all others. As they refer to God, his character and government, although expressed in the strongest terms which could well be chosen, yet I do not think that our author has over-estimated their magnitude, or indeed that words could overstate it. "All that makes existence itself in any degree a blessing," says Dr. Beecher, "nay, all that prevents it from becoming a most fearful curse, is at stake. There is no other interest of which the mind can form a conception, that deserves for a moment to be compared with the interest that every created being has in the character of God. Not only individual non-existence, but much more, universal non-existence, is to be preferred to existence under a God, the measures of whose admin-

istration should violate the fundamental and eternal principles of honor and of right."

I wish especially to call the reader's attention to this eloquent declaration, and to the strong preference of *non-existence*, individual and general, to *existence* under a Divine government, in which those principles were not legitimately carried out. I have a problem to be solved by this rule by-and-by.

Let not the reader suppose that I have been thus careful in originally stating, and here recalling, the bold position which our author has chosen upon this subject, because I regarded such sentiments as peculiar, or wholly new. They are, for the most part, old acquaintance to those who are defenders of what is called a more liberal interpretation of christianity. The principal novelty consists in their coming from such a source. Here is one who, deservedly standing in the front ranks of New England orthodoxy, bred under the influence of its most rigid features, and still holding to them with an evident sincere conviction, finding himself pressed with the awful weight of their absurdities, as he had been taught them, and their eternal conflict with the Divine perfections, as these perfections are revealed through his own moral nature, breaks, like the lion from the meshes of the hunter's net, and declares that he must be free from these toils or die! Those moral intuitions, in

which Pelagianism had its origin, are to be shut out of view no longer. They demand a hearing, they deserve it, and they must be heard. The church shall not continue to dally with them, or evade them, or hide them in the fog-banks of mystery. If there is any reliable truth to be laid hold of, these moral principles are true. Whatever stands in the way of them must be put aside. They must be sustained, whatever else goes down. And I think that he has intended to be true to this conviction. He has applied them faithfully to the views of his brethren. They have been, in his hand, the keen and polished blade, more fatal than any Damascus ever wielded by Saladdin. Through and through the very vitals of orthodoxy, as now existing, has he thrust it with a strong hand and steady nerve. Never can it fully recover from his attack, for though the external wound may close, the internal hemorrhage will be only the more fatal.

Now I only beg the privilege of applying to his views the same rule by which he has tried theirs. I deem it but right and honorable to do so, and I cannot but believe that he will justify it when he considers that the highest interests of Divine truth, and no merely combative spirit, prompts the effort. He will not shrink from a test, for his own views, which he himself has instituted, or hesitate in acknowledging the legiti-

imate results which have flowed from his own argumentation.

In the foregoing statement of moral principles, we have the *great rule* or *standard* by which I wish to measure the character and estimate the value of the Doctor's theology.

CHAPTER XI.

ACKNOWLEDGED AMOUNT OF THE CLAIMS OF THESE
PRINCIPLES ON THE DIVINE BEING.

PREVIOUS to their application to our author's views, I would call special attention to the acknowledged claims of these principles on the Divine Being. If these are truly principles of the Divine nature, attributes of the Divine mind, what could we rationally expect from their legitimate action in regard to mankind? (See chap. III.)

The following quotations will sufficiently show the views which have been entertained by standard orthodox writers upon this subject, and it is not a little wonderful how, in plain view of its utter hostility to other fundamental notions of theirs, they could possibly have conceded so much. It would really seem as though they had taken the most extreme positions in order to make the antagonism between them the more fatal. In fact, if our author's suggestion, (p. 223), that satanic influence ever entered into the formation of a system, is correct; if a diabolical power had inter-

posed to put dogmas into such a position that no "re-adjustment" could ever restore them to harmony, then are there clear indications of such an influence in the hostile dogmas assumed here.

If there were such a personal being as Satan, how must he have been pleased to hear such conflicting views held as the following: On the one hand, total depravity, a sinful nature, the whole nature "a seed-plot of sin," and all men exposed, before birth even, "to death itself, and the pains of hell forever." On the other hand, the moral obligation which was so solemnly binding on the Creator to make and endow them, primarily, in conformity with the admirable pattern set forth in the following extracts.

Look at them well. Our author takes them from men who stood "high in reputation for sound and orthodox views," and shows their opinion as to the claim of these moral principles on the Almighty. Turretin says, that "God could not, consistently with his glory, make men otherwise than with a good constitution, well-ordered powers, and original righteousness, so that there should be in him no inclination to sin, no sinful propensities, and no conflict of the inferior against the superior powers; but on the other hand, the love of holiness and of God, and a strong and constant propensity to all that is right. He utterly denied," says Dr. Beecher, from whom the quotation

comes, "that God could consistently make man with mere natural powers, which, although free from sin, tended to sin, and then produce a tendency to good only by a supernatural influence." (p. 43.) Similar views to these, he adds, were also strongly expressed by Watts, John Wesley, the Westminster divines, and even the divines of the old school of Princeton.

The following is his version of Dr. Watts: "In considering what is due from the Creator to a new-created being, he states, at some length, that he ought to confer on him a perfection of natural powers, both of body and spirit, considered as united and adapted to his present state. Even if they did not involve all the perfections which God can confer, or man produce by cultivation, yet, at least, they ought to be perfectly sufficient for his present well-being and station; that his bodily powers should be in perfect order, his reason clear, his judgment uncorrupted, his conscience upright and sensible; that he should have no bias to sin, but a bias to holiness, that is, to the love of God and of man; that there should be an entire subordination of the inferior to the superior powers; indeed, that he should have a concreated principle of holiness; in short, that he should have the image of God, not merely natural and political, but *moral*."

"If a new-made creature," he adds, "had not

a propensity to love and obey God, but was in a state of mere indifference to good or evil, then his being put into such an union with flesh and blood, among a thousand temptations, would have been an overbalance on the side of vice. But our reason can never suppose that God, the wise, just, and good, would have placed a new-made creature in such a situation." (p. 45.)

Now I can understand all this very well. I can easily perceive why those great and good men should have offered such views, and Dr. Beecher accept them; providing sin was *necessarily* an exposure of the sinner to the loss of all things—to infinite torments. For in this case, to seemingly justify God would demand that men should have, by nature, this powerful "bias to holiness," this *very* exalted moral condition, in the beginning. But, if sin, though regarded as the worst thing in the universe, be viewed, nevertheless, as a finite and temporary evil merely, one perhaps unavoidable by even infinite wisdom, in the incipient stages of a moral state, and out of which all men will be finally delivered by the guiding influences of the Divine truth and grace, then I see not why so *very high* a normal position should be demanded by the principles of justice in the creator.

If man was made for growth and development, as we shall proceed to show hereafter, then a much humbler commencement of the great process

might be admitted without much difficulty. At any rate, he should not, in this case, be created full-grown. There should be a chance for rising, for I believe that growth is always upward, never downward. To place him at the top of the ladder in the beginning, would reverse the action of the ordinary laws of development.

However, waiving all such considerations for the present, let us return to these strong concessions which have been made in regard to the legitimate demands of the great moral principles of right on the Almighty. All which is truly and properly embraced in them, it will be borne in mind, our author claims as justly due from the Divine Being. The laws of His own exalted nature would allow Him to do no less than this for His creatures. And let it be added here also, that the claims of these principles rise in proportion to the dignity and true greatness of the being to whom they belong. An increase of power necessarily increases the obligations growing out of these principles. The Doctor's statement of this fact is so eminently rational, and, withal, so very forcible, that I cannot well resist the inclination to give it somewhat fully.

“God has made us intuitively to perceive and feel, and, therefore, he also perceives and feels, that increase of powers to any degree of magnitude produces, not a decrease, but an increase, of

obligation to feel and act benevolently towards inferiors; that is, with an honorable regard to their true and highest good. * * * No moral principles are recognized as true with a clearer and more absolute intuition than those which I have now stated. How is it in the parental relation? Do not all feel that the superior powers of parents create an obligation of the most touching and imperative kind towards a weak, defenceless, new-born infant? Do not such superior powers, and the fact that their example will exert a controlling influence, sacredly bind them in all things so to use their powers, and regulate their example, as to promote the highest good of the young heir of immortality who lies helpless in their arms? Would it not seem unspeakably horrible to allege their superior powers as a reason for doing otherwise?

“If, therefore, God gives existence to inferior and dependent minds, is he, the Infinite Father, can he be, under any other or different obligations? Does he desire us to think of him as not tenderly affected, and not bound by the appeal made to him by a new-created mind, in view of the fearful eternity that spreads out before him, so to exert his infinite powers, and so to order his infinite example, as shall most entirely tend to promote his eternal good? Does not every intuitive conviction, every honorable impulse of a

benevolent mind, call for such an assurance concerning God, in order to be satisfied with his character? *Is not this the dividing line between the Divine and the satanic spirit?*" (pp. 31, 32. et seq.) On reading these declarations, I could not avoid the exclamation: What noble sentiments! How manfully uttered! For a brief moment, our author seems to be forgetful of the mournful policy which orthodoxy ascribes to the spirit and government of the Almighty. He has stirred the very depths of his own moral nature. Out of the fulness of its honorable and generous affections the heart speaks without fear of dogma or formula or creed. All the higher and better feelings of his soul have full sway. No spirit of political casuistry is allowed to interfere with the sacred intuitions of honor and right. He turns his eye upon little children, the babe nestling in its mother's arms. The parental feeling throbs and heaves within him. "What would not I do—I, a poor frail imperfect mortal—what would not I do for my own little ones, those who are even dearer to me than life?"

The spirit of this question would utter itself, for it was burning within him like volcanic fire. And what earthly parent has never felt these questions shaking his whole being? Oftentimes, in ministering at the death-bed, or the funeral, have I heard lamentations that would break a heart of

stone, and exclamations similar in spirit to the foregoing question. Parents have said to me, "O that the fate of my child could have been given into my own hands! Or that it could have been left to the disposal of any other person; for, surely, no *human* being could be *forever* cruel to it! O that I could lay down my own life for it!" And this is not the expression of a bad heart. It is not the result of irreverence, or a spirit that desires to rebel against God.

It is from the highest utterances of our moral nature. It springs from feelings the most sacred and honorable of any to the human heart. And I see not how our author, who appears to be so sensitive to them, can possibly allow them to be cramped and fettered by the desire to sustain and harmonize views which are most deeply and fatally at war with them. All along through his volume, it is painfully apparent that, whenever he speaks of the action of these great moral principles, as due from the Creator, he is careful in specifying that they must be understood as relating only to "new-made beings," to "new-created minds." Why was this cautious phraseology kept up? Can it be possible that he feared that these same principles would be applied to God's dealings with human minds at some other period than just at the moment of their creation? There is something remarkable and highly significant about it.

I would intimate no reproach to our author personally in this matter, for I do not believe that he is deserving of any. But it is easy to see how the best minds may be closed to plain truths, or feel driven to adopt contradictory opinions, for the sake of defending other notions which are dear, as he shows to have been the case with his brethren; and though I feel great respect for him, yet I am unwilling, on this account, to let what is horrible in his views pass unquestioned. This loop-hole of retreat for their deformities ought not to be allowed.

Let me ask again, then,—what does he really mean when he talks so eloquently of the *principles* of justice, honor, and benevolence, in the Divine mind? Does he mean what he *says* so repeatedly—that they are PRINCIPLES, and not merely temporary and paltry *expedients*? If these are truly elements of the Divine nature—*principles belonging to the Divine mind*—and such he certainly intends to declare that they are—then they must of necessity be *eternal* and *immutable*. If they exist and act at one time, they must exist and act at all times. The very fact that they are recognized and spoken of as *laws* of the *Divine nature*, demands the acknowledgment also that He is strictly guided and governed by them *always*. Why, then, should our author attempt in this manner to limit their

operation to minds newly-created? Did he mean to be understood that God would deal justly and honorably and kindly by human souls, at the precise moment in which he created them, *but at no other period?* I confess that it looks so. It appears to my mind very much like saying, "Yes, God certainly was all which these moral principles in Him really demanded, and He fully and faithfully exercised these at just the moment when the minds of His creatures were *new-made*; but then we must be exceedingly careful how we suspect that He will ever be, or do, thus again!" Does not his phraseology carry the idea that after men were once fairly created, they were turned off like the ostrich brood to shift for themselves; that God was no longer under any obligations to them; nay, that the principles of His own nature were no longer operative or binding upon Him? He might, then, if He pleased, or at any other time, treat them unkindly, unjustly, and dishonorably, with the most perfect propriety. Do not our author's qualifying expressions imply all this or nothing?

Doubtless he would say that these terms had especially in view what is commonly termed a "*forfeiture of rights*" on the part of the creature. Of this forfeiture, I shall have more to say hereafter. For the present, I must suppose that he would not intentionally take so monstrous a posi-

tion as I have indicated. It is too revolting to all our best moral conceptions. He must know, as indeed we all know, that nothing more inconsistent with the Divine perfections could possibly be conceived of by the human mind. Every one, not wholly blinded and besotted by prejudice, must see that it is no more an impeachment of the Divine character to suppose that God would deal unjustly and dishonorably by us at one time, than it would be to suppose that he would do so at another time. If he could not properly treat men thus, in creating them then, he could not at any other period. Either all this must be fully admitted or we must take the ground that these boasted principles of the Divine nature are, after all that has been said of them, but merely the paltry and despicable impulse of the demagogue who takes the stump in defence of the position to-day which he will openly repudiate from the rostrum to-morrow.

Of course, it will be understood that this is a matter entirely distinct from all questions of human *merit* or *deserving* on our part, and ought never to be confounded with any such thing. Man's moral character is entirely another affair, and has nothing to introduce it here. It has no more legitimate business with the question at issue than Satan has among the sons of God. The question is purely one concerning the *action* of

moral principles in the Divine nature. This, I maintain, must always be *in spirit* essentially the same. These principles never change. And, although their *manifestation* may be infinitely varied just as occasion or circumstances may require, yet, in themselves, they are fixed permanent and unalterable. The action of each, whatever may be the mode of operation, must conform strictly to its own inherent nature. Justice, for example, may see that pleasure is required to-day, and pain to-morrow, but it is nevertheless equally justice still. It never can become injustice, or allow of injustice in connection with it. So of the principle of honor, or of benevolence, or of any other moral attribute. Neither can ever become its own opposite, or act out of the strict line of the law indwelling in its own nature.

It is equally evident, that among these high moral attributes of the Divine mind, there is no conflict or collision whatever. Mercy, for example, is never unjust—justice is never unmerciful. Strictly speaking, all are but modifications of the same Divine essence or perfection, and all resolvable into that great primary strata which underlies God's nature—LOVE. Out from this vast fountain flow all his attributes as streams. "*God is Love,*" says the bible; but it never tells us that any other attribute or principle can thus sum up His whole Being. Not that I mean to confound

the elements of His moral nature, or blend them in mysticism. Wisdom, justice, power, and truth,—these are not properly one and the same, but they must so spring from one central source as to meet and harmonize in the personality of Jehovah. The orange ray of light is not the red, nor the violet, nor the blue, and yet all these flow in radiant beauty from a common central point—the sun.

Having thus recalled our author's statement of moral principles, and presented his view of their claims on the Divine Being,—having shown that, as laws of the Divine nature, they must be equally obligatory at all times, and under all possible circumstances,—that, if their legitimate action was called for, as he claims in regard to “new-created minds,” it was equally called for at every other stage of the Divine economy,—that God must of necessity abide by these principles continually and forever; and that their equal and harmonious action must constitute the great law of his government:—*we have thus a sure and perfect Rule by which we may safely try either the purposes or actions which are attributed to Him.*

CHAPTER XII.

THE TRIAL OF THE CASE.—THE RULE APPLIED TO
THE ACT OF CREATION.

WE have arrived now at a very interesting and important stage of this inquiry. Our main purpose is either about to fail or be fully realized. The great test is to be applied which will determine, so far as our ability can decide it, whether the Divine character, so sadly and mournfully impeached and disgraced by all the prevalent forms of orthodoxy, is really so relieved by the views of Dr. Beecher as to require no further vindication, or whether the dark stain of cruelty and injustice still rests upon it—rendering it gloomy and repulsive to our thoughts, and utterly repugnant to our highest and holiest moral intuitions.

Here, then, from the sublime heights to which our author has so carefully and safely led us—standing upon the elevated table-land of God's moral perfections, with the eternal RULE in our hands which he has kindly furnished, let us take

a little wider survey than he seems to have been disposed to do. Let us sweep the entire range of the Divine economy, so far as our limited faculties will allow us to do it. Let us trace each step of the great Divine process, and endeavor to estimate it in the light of these immortal principles.

In the first place, let us apply this rule to the *act of creation*. No portion of God's economy involved more serious and important considerations than this. In fact, every thing subsequent to this was wrapped up in it as in a germ, and must spring forth from it, taking its entire complexion from this source. I allude here, of course, especially to human existence and every thing essentially connected with it, or bearing upon its interests. *The conferring of this existence was God's own free act*, and if ever any act of His demanded imperatively the deliberate and faithful guidance of these high moral principles, it must have been the solemn act of creating man.

In regard to all the other forms of being around us, animate and inanimate, except so far as these were intimately connected with human interests and welfare, it was comparatively unimportant. Though we could not reconcile ourselves to the thought that there was any actual injustice, or even want of goodness, here; that the Divine benevolence had overlooked even the meanest of his creatures, and given the worm, or the reptile,

or the lowest thing which crawls, an existence which was positively worse than non-existence; still, these, so far as we are informed, have no immortality before them; no infinite interests therefore at stake. With man, the case was a different one. He was to be made an immortal being. Interests which it is beyond the power of words to express, or finite minds to fully grasp, even, were directly involved in the Divine determination to create him. All which was valuable to him in the present, or dear to him in the interminable future, rested wholly upon this previous Divine decision.

Must we not, therefore—can we, indeed, do otherwise than suppose, that, in view of these solemn realities, the Supreme Being would not allow himself to vary a hair's breadth from the most sacred regard to these principles? "In this wide universe," says Dr. Beecher, (p. 481), "no thought is so affecting as to exist for eternity, and to be called on, in a relatively brief time of trial, to decide the character of that eternity."

How it pains our highest conceptions to attempt to embrace, in all their magnitude, the results which were to hinge entirely on the act of creating man! And here, in regard to the previous Divine decision that man should exist, I wish, more than in reference to all things else, to apply the great moral rule with which our author has sup-

plied us. He gives us an extract from the diary of John Adams, afterwards President of the United States, and of whom he says that "though but a youth, he writes with strong common sense, and with the clearness and force that distinguished his maturer years;" and which I wish to introduce here. It gives a legal form and power to the argument of which I wish to avail myself. The sentiment, though not uttered with direct reference to the point before us now, is clearly applicable to it, and comes to the reason with all the force of a moral axiom. "If one man or being," says Mr. Adams, "out of pure generosity and without any expectation of returns, is about to confer any favor or emolument upon another, he has a right and is at liberty to choose in what manner and by what means to confer it. He may confer the favor by his own hand, or by the hand of his servant; and the obligation to gratitude is equally strong upon the benefited being. The mode of bestowing does not diminish the kindness, provided the commodity or good is brought to us equally perfect, and without our expense.

"But, on the other hand, if one being is the *original cause* of pain, sorrow, or suffering to another, *voluntarily*, and without provocation, it is injurious to that other, whatever means he might employ, and whatever circumstances the

conveyance of the injury might be attended with." (p. 118.)

Now in fair view of all these facts and suggestions, and with the Doctor's great moral rule in our hands, let us attend to that grand session of the Divine attributes in council when the determination was formed, and the resolution passed to *create man*. Let us go back in imagination to that exciting moment. It matters not, to my present purpose, *when* this period might have been. We may say that it occurred but just previously to the formation of Adam, or thousands of years prior to this, as Dr. Beecher supposes. It is enough for us now to suppose that there actually was such a period, and that God was equally as just and honorable and benevolent at that time as he ever was, or ever will be; or, indeed, as it is possible for infinite perfections to render him. Man has, at this period, no existence. All the elements which were to constitute him slumbered in their primeval condition. Even the determination to create him has not yet become matured.

Now as the creature was not consulted in regard to this matter at all, and indeed could not be, as his existence, if he had any, was to be *enforced* upon him, without reference to what might be his choice, could he have an opportunity to express it,—but *wholly as an act of the Divine will*;—I ask, with all the solemnity which such a question can

inspire, what does the *rule* given us demand in this case? Let there be no dodging here. Let the question be looked fairly and fully in the face and candidly answered.

Does not the RULE imperatively require in this case that HUMAN EXISTENCE, IF ENFORCED AT ALL, SHOULD BE, TO EACH AND EVERY INDIVIDUAL, WHEN TAKEN AS A WHOLE, A GOOD, AND NOT AN EVIL; A BLESSING, AND NOT A CURSE?

I hardly need to say, what must be, to the mind of every ingenuous reader, so very plainly perceived, that every thing of most importance to my own views is directly involved in this question. True, I have yet to apply this same *rule* still further—to the entire process of the Divine economy—as I have already intimated. But what will it all avail, if I am not secure in my position here?

If I may not be certain, beyond the possibility of question, that the Supreme Being, in this most important of all His acts concerning us,—namely, the decision to give us existence at all, or otherwise—was sacredly obedient to the high moral principles of His nature, what need is there that we should talk any more about the matter? Why go on and apply them, or pretend that they ought to be applied, to what are comparatively minor particulars of His government? If the *Rule* we are using is not wholly a false one, unworthy of a moment's thought even, except to be condemned

and repudiated entirely, *why* shall it not be applied here, rigidly and faithfully and logically? If there is an attempt to modify it, or evade its full force in this case, in the name of reason let it never be resorted to again anywhere. If it is true or good at all, it is wholly applicable to the question before us. I ask, then, whether the creator had any *right* to enforce a *being* upon us which should not be on the whole really better than *no being*,—to compel an *existence* that should not be preferable as a whole to *non-existence*?

I will not say that we should be very careful how we answer this question, notwithstanding its infinite importance, for there seems to be but one answer that is possible in the case. If God took human spirits from non-existence, so to speak, and enforced existence upon them, without their knowledge or consent, but from the exercise of His own free will alone, then He was bound by all the most sacred principles of honor and justice, as well as benevolence, to make that existence on the whole a blessing. I say, *on the whole*, because I regard this qualifying phrase as very necessary.

I can easily see how, from a variety of causes, either from a necessity existing in the very nature of things, and which even infinite wisdom and power could not control, or springing from His own infinite discernment of what was fittest and best, all things being fully considered, He should

voluntarily select a plan of existence for us, some of the features of which, when taken separate and alone, should appear defective, and which would really be so if they existed alone. Thus, if it was clearly apparent to the Divine mind that it would certainly secure the best good of each and every individual *in the end*, to give them any kind of existence, moral or otherwise, or to endow them in any peculiar way, or place them in any condition involving sin and suffering or *trial* for a season, it would be plainly consistent with His moral character and perfections to do so. But then, there must be this absolute certainty in His own mind to begin with—namely, that this *good end* in the case of each individual should be finally attained. There should be no infinite hazard introduced here. Any latitude short of this might be safely allowed to Him. The pendulum in its swing might touch the poles, even, if it only settled at the equator at last. Or, as the musical composer is freely indulged with the introduction of discords—*ad libitum*—into his finest compositions, if he only ends in harmony with the key-note; so the Divine Being might, wholly consistently with His perfections allow of any conceivable amount of moral or physical evil, if the highest spiritual and immortal interests of each individual in His creation were previously secured by His foresight. All the pains of this mortal life, augmented a

thousand-fold even, might be piled heaven-high upon each human head, and still justice look serenely on, and benevolence smile at it, and honor be fully satisfied with it, if it were clearly and definitely seen by these perfections that the highest and best ends which they could seek or ask for, were only *certain* of attainment by each individual in the end. Because, in this case, existence, *as a whole*, would be a good, an infinite good; and this is all which they could really require.

“The *mode* of bestowing,” says President Adams, in language already quoted, “does not diminish the kindness, provided the commodity or good is brought to us equally perfect.” It is not the peculiar *process* by which we are to judge of the Divine economy, but of the character of the *end* had in view. If this is only sufficiently good and noble, and certain to be attained, infinite wisdom may arrange the details of the process as seems to it fittest and best. But *the end* proposed must be wholly secure before the Divine forces could move the first step in creating men consistently with the great moral Rule which we have been considering.

If there were any insurmountable obstacles in the way of attaining this end, certainly the creator must have foreseen them. Thus, if the kind of existence which he proposed to himself for man was beset with such difficulties as he could not

control or overrule, the facts must have been all present to his fore-knowledge, and in this case the highest obligations of His nature bound Him to have left them uncreated, or to have given them a different state. Surely, He was under the pressure of no foreign necessity. He was not compelled to create men at all. If it were done, it must be from his own free choice, deliberately made and voluntarily executed.

No shuffling of terms can shut this fact from sight. In creating man, the Divine Being acted wholly as he preferred to act. Seeing "the end from the beginning," and with a full and clear comprehension of the entire whole which man would ever *be* or *do* or *suffer*, He deliberately *chose this existence for us in preference to non-existence*, and this He could not have done honorably unless it was positively certain to His mind that this existence *as a whole* was better than non-existence.

It will be observed that I have been careful to specify, not only that human existence, as a whole, shall be good, in order to justify the creative act, but that this shall be the case also in reference to *each individual* of the race. Justice and right have no regard to numbers. For God, to confer a good upon a thousand, would not justify Him in conferring an absolute evil upon fifty, or even upon one individual. The great Rule of Divine

He chose the highest which was possible to the world

rectitude is required to be applied just as sincerely and just as fully to the fifty, or to the one, as though there were no other beings in the universe. And if it would be inconsistent with that rule to give an existence to all men, which it was known would prove an infinite curse to them all, then would it be equally inconsistent to give such an existence to any one individual. It is not the number to whom it is given which makes the act wrong, but the simple fact that the gift is, on the whole, *an evil*, and not a good. This would make the wrong the same in principle whether there were one individual or millions.

I would call especial attention to this consideration, from the fact that most orthodox writers, and our author also, if I understand him, seem to take it for granted that any plan or process which eventuates in the final good of the greater portion of mankind is perfectly right and just, although the final and infinite loss of the remainder is clearly contemplated and foreseen by it. Thus, it fully justifies the Divine character in Dr. Beecher's view, for God to give man the ability to determine his own ultimate fate by his own free will, if it be seen that a very large proportion of them in the exercise of this ability will finally secure their own highest welfare, even though the remainder utterly perish.

This infinite risk must be hazarded. It is neces-

sary to the final good of those who are saved; and the attainment of this end by the saved justifies the *plan*, though the rest are lost. It is worse than useless here to go talking about the *merits* of these lost individuals, and how they *deserved* to be damned, and actually chose it out of their own free-will. This is pushing into the discussion entirely another matter, and one wholly foreign to the question now at issue. I will attend to this matter in its proper place, but I will not consent to have it thrust in here where it evidently does not belong. It is not the moral character of *man* that we are discussing, but the moral character of *God*, and I do not wish to have attention diverted from this true issue until it is fully disposed of. The real question before us is, can the Divine Being, consistently with the great moral rule which we are applying to him, adopt a *plan of existence* for us, which contemplates *as one of its foreseen results* the infliction of an *infinite curse* upon even *one* individual? It is a question as to what *He* should do, not as to what man may come to deserve after he is created. At the period to which the question points us, there was no such thing as man existing. And the question is, shall he exist at all, and if so, *how*, and under what circumstances? It has reference to the *Divine free-will*, and not to the human free-will. And I claim that, in this case, the Divine rectitude is

violated if such a plan of existence is freely chosen as contemplates the infinite loss of a single human soul.

And it does not help the matter in the least to say that the plan was called for by the best good of all the rest, even. Does equity or honor allow of the sacrifice of one to the interests of any number, even, when all occupy a common ground of equality in the beginning? And it is evident that prior to their creation they did all stand alike. No one could be rightfully preferred to another in the Divine mind, and the laws that bound him to make existence (in case he gave it) a good to any, equally bound him to make it, on the whole, a good to each and every individual of the race.

I would ask any good man—I would respectfully ask Dr. Beecher—whether, in case the question were submitted to him, he would accept of an existence for himself, however high or great or glorious it might promise to be, if he knew, at the same time that it was purchased by a hazard which would prove fatal, infinitely fatal, to a single human soul? For myself, I ask no such existence. I should scorn to take it if it were offered to me. Nay, I should loathe the intense selfishness which would make me hesitate in this case!

Equally confident am I that his decision would be the same if the offer were made to himself.

He might feel that God had "redeemed and regenerated him; but this gives him no relief." "His distress is not on his own account." "He feels as if he could not be bribed by the offer of all the honors of the universe to pretend to worship or praise a God whose character he cannot defend." Such is his own confession. And while it does honor to his own soul, it shows that he would never be willing to accept an existence for himself purchased by the adoption of a Divine plan in which infinite ruin was foreseen as the result to a single human soul.

The following facts, then, seem to be fully substantiated :

1. Inasmuch as God deliberately chose for man an existence, preferring it to non-existence for him; and inasmuch as he is just and good in all things, this existence must be a blessing. Men, therefore, never were exposed to infinite or endless hell-torments.

2. This principle here adopted as a rule for the Divine guidance, does not forbid him to permit any amount of finite evil or suffering, because existence would be, even then, an infinite good, as a whole.

3. No plan of existence could be rightfully adopted which clearly contemplated the final ruin of, even a single soul, although such plan might appear to secure the best interests of the great body.

I am confident that I shall have the assent of most candid minds to these positions. And I cannot forbear introducing here, in support of the principles involved in the foregoing argument, another extract from the clear and profound logic of Rev. Dr. Ballou. In treating the doctrine of endless misery in its relations to the Divine goodness, in an article published in the Universalist Quarterly for Oct. 1853—he is reasoning from the commonly admitted ground that God is really and truly *good* unto all men. He proceeds with the argument thus: “Now taking this fundamental truth in which all Christians agree, we shall regard it as one of the fixed points in theology, which must not be disturbed, and with which all other opinions must be brought into harmony. Letting it stand simply in the form in which it is universally received, namely, that God is good to all, and keeping it separate from all further definitions, we will try to take its bearings on the common doctrine of endless misery. We think it will appear that this doctrine is absolutely irreconcilable with the truth, that God is good to all, in any sense. To us there seems to be so direct and complete a repugnance between the two, that if we adopt the one in any of its forms, we must reject the other in all its forms. We have thought much on the subject, and, as we trust, with candor, and with an earnest desire to see the matter just

as it is. For this purpose, we have sometimes imagined to ourselves the case of one who was to be miserable forever; and then we have sought for some place in the course of his existence, for at least one single spot, in it, here or hereafter, where it would be possible for the divine goodness to come in, and we find that there is no such spot.

“Let us go back to the commencement, and begin with man’s creation—let us follow him onward, step by step, through the successive stages of his existence. Suppose that God created some who will be forever miserable—say, if we please, through their own fault. But here is a question that we cannot put aside: Did the creator know, beforehand, that such would be their end if he brought them into being? We are obliged to answer—Yes; he foresees the end from the beginning; and if such will be their end, he saw it *then* as plainly as he ever will. And now comes the closing question: Under these circumstances, was it, on his part, an act of goodness to them to bring them into existence? Was it kind in Him to create them, foreseeing at the same time what the result would be? It was optional with him to give them being, or to forbear. Now, we certainly know that, in such a case, it would be mercy not to create them. Indeed, greater cruelty cannot be conceived of than, with such a foresight, to

call them up from unoffending non-existence, and to send them forth into the hazards that were sure to ruin them forever. There is no possible way to question this conclusion short of denying the infinite knowledge of the creator, and to say that he did not foresee the issue of what he was doing."

I would remark here, by the way, that *this is* the mode virtually adopted by Dr. Adam Clarke, by which to evade or turn the point of this argument. He says, in substance, God has the ability to know all things, as he has the ability to do all things; but as the latter does not require that he should do all things, so the former does not imply that he must know all things. He concludes, therefore, that, in reference to the volitions of the free-agents whom he has created, he *suspends* his knowledge, and determines that he will not know beforehand what these volitions will be!

But does not the very fact of his suspending his knowledge in reference to certain particular things pre-suppose a knowledge of such things? Dr. Clarke's theory involves an absurdity. And yet there seems to be no other possible way to avoid the force of the argument based upon the Divine fore-knowledge.

Dr. Ballou continues: "We are aware of a reply, sometimes made, that his knowing what their end would be, did not oblige them to incur

it. We grant this ; but we do not see that it has anything to do with our present subject. The point of inquiry now before us is, with respect to the goodness of God towards these miserable cast-aways, in creating them, and not with respect to their folly, which is another matter. Admit, without examination, all that we ever heard pleaded on this ground, that he gave them free-agency enough to shun the final doom, though he still knew that, as matter of fact, they would not shun it. Admit that he warned them of the danger, that he opened a way of escape, and entreated them to turn. It may be said that, if they persist in the face of all this, and rush with open eyes into eternal perdition, the blame is theirs. Certainly ; we grant, at least, that they would be to blame. We are not trying to take off from their share of the folly and guilt. But what we wonder people do not see is, that all this does not in any way alter the case with respect to the part imputed to their creator. It does not go to show that, in consideration of their subsequent perversity, he would be good in bringing them into an existence which he knew would be wretched forever. This plea of free-agency, abused by man, and of gracious opportunities neglected by him, may indeed serve to condemn the creature ; and were his character or his deserts the subject of inquiry here, the plea would be in place. But it is out of place,

when we are considering what preceded, and was independent of all human agency,—we mean the divine act of creation. Here it can serve only to call off attention from the fundamental truth proposed and to make us overlook its bearings, by turning our thoughts to a foreign matter—to the part that man has acted. We must remember, also, that to criminate the creature ever so deeply, does nothing towards proving the goodness of any original disregard of his welfare.

“Let us illustrate the case. Suppose I awaken a little child from his innocent sleep, and send him forth on a perilous way, full of covered pitfalls, and beset with fatal precipices on each side, where a false step would plunge him to a horrible death,—as it is said that a wrong course in human life will plunge us into endless woe. Suppose that I warn the child of all the dangers, give him maps of the narrow path, and every means of guidance; and that if he only use them as he may, and heed my directions,—turning this corner, and shunning that half-concealed abyss, until he reaches the end—he will be safe. But suppose, at the same time, that when I send him forth, I am so well acquainted with the heedlessness, and presumption, and impulsive temper of the little creature, as to know, with moral certainty, that he will not go a dozen steps before he forgets everything I told him, and that in chase of butterflies he will stum-

ble over the edge, and be dashed in pieces. And it turns out so; it is just what I expected; it is what I foresaw from the beginning.

“Now, the child was a free-agent in the same sense that we are, and he was to blame that he did not take better care; but does this excuse *me*? And what would be thought of my sincerity, should I have the hardihood to pretend that I was good to the child, in calling him up from his slumber on such an errand! even though I had offered ever so magnificent a reward to him, in case of success,—knowing all the while that destruction, and not success, awaited him? There is not a plainer principle in morals than that *the expected result of a deliberate and voluntary act determines what is the nature of the motive*. And if it were a fact, that our Heavenly Father had created any in clear knowledge that they would be wretched forever, no piety could suppress the conviction that he was not good to them in so doing. Yet, this is what the doctrine of endless misery asserts that he has done. It is not in their creation, then, that any goodness is shown them.”

Rev. T. S. King, in an exceedingly brilliant article upon the work under review—a criticism flashing with wit, and bristling with the most pungent logic—though all good-natured, and who, by the way, is a warm advocate of the most thorough views of free-will, appears also to con-

firm my argument in regard to the rectitude of the Divine act in human creation.

“If this earth should answer to all that Dr. Beecher’s theory allows us to expect from it, the great difficulty to be solved would centre in this *original gift of free-will*, and refer also to the kinds of temptation with which the prince of wicked spirits was allowed to ply us in our former state. Will our instinctive sense of right and benevolence justify *any scheme of creation*, however fair its opening scenes, which, after two limited seasons of probation, exposes innumerable millions to indescribable and unmitigated woe? It is useless to say that this tremendous risk is inseparable from *free-will*: what hinders the probation from being extended? * * * No soul, it is probable, would accept an existence, however smiling the dawn of it might be made, in which such a horrible possibility of infamy and suffering was suspended against any temporary probation. And if we may doubt that a soul would freely stipulate thus with its Maker, *is it right for God to force it into existence* when the scales are so unbalanced?”

And I may add, here, that in case any human soul would agree to accept such an existence, on such fatal conditions, it would only argue its infantile weakness and folly, and show that its creator, who is wiser, should have judged better than this for it.

Would not "the relations and obligations that exist between great and powerful minds and such as are more feeble and limited," and which Dr. Beecher maintains give the weaker a most touching and sacred claim on the stronger for sympathy and assistance, plead mightily with the Supreme Being that he would leave in uncreated nothingness all such as he must foresee would become infinite losers by their existence?

The results of our argument, then, on this point, are: 1. Unless human existence was clearly foreseen by its author to be, on the whole a good, to each individual, then the great *rule of right* was violated in the act of man's creation. 2. Taking the safe position furnished us, that "God has never violated his own laws, and never will," the existence of each individual must be, on the whole, an infinite blessing.

Thus the Divine character is wholly vindicated in regard to the one great particular wherein it has been most sadly impeached, and a wide and clear path is open for its complete justification through the whole range of the Divine economy. Light streams from heaven upon our pathway, and the soul rejoices in view of a happy and glorious immortality.

CHAPTER XIII.

OBJECTIONS CONSIDERED.

Endless misery consistent with goodness.

IT will be seen, from the preceding chapter, that I have supposed that, although the theory of Dr. Beecher may seem to remove the reproach from the Divine character which is cast upon it by the more prevalent forms of orthodoxy, which claim that God holds men responsible for sins in which they had no agency, it does, nevertheless, still leave his character under an equally fatal impeachment, by allowing that he created myriads of human spirits with a perfect knowledge of the fact that the existence which he enforced of his own free-will, would prove an infinite curse to its possessor.

The whole force of this argument springs from the fact that endless misery is not consistent with the good of the being who suffers it, and, hence, not consistent with the goodness of Him who inflicts it. But I find a strange attempt on the part of our author, (p. 156, et seq.) to show the essential harmony

of eternal torments with the goodness of the Divine Being! It is, perhaps, on the whole, the least satisfactory portion of his book to a candid and logical mind. Infinite goodness inflicting endless hell-torments! And the Herculean task of solving this moral absurdity is all performed in about three pages of his work! I do not wonder greatly, that Rev. Mr. Ellis characterizes it as "very poor reasoning, and very dreadful moralizing," or that he should "enter a protest to the drift of it." There is something at once inexplicable and painful in the coldness and apparent indifference with which this subject is treated and turned off by one who has showed himself, in other cases, susceptible of the deepest moral emotions in view of the least semblance of injustice or want of perfect equity in the Divine administration.

To the elucidation of all the nicer shades of subtle speculation evolved by the conflict of old-school and new-school, he has given abundant space, and the effort of powers that must command respect. And yet, in regard to this momentous subject, one "which involves the whole question of government and order in the universe," he speaks as though it were a mere metaphysical problem; deals it a few paragraphs of loose reasoning, and dismisses it about as cavalierly as he would dust his coat. He does go so far, however, as to acknowledge that others *may* have

some feeling about the matter that will be troublesome, and thinks that, so long as the present system of orthodoxy remains, some, even who are pious men, may seek relief, as John Foster did, by denying endless hell-torments.

His argument on this subject, such as it is, stands in objection to the basis of my argument in the last chapter, and I have thought this the most proper place, therefore, for its re-consideration. "It is always interesting," says Rev. Mr. King, in the article before referred to, "to watch the mental gymnastics among verbal artificers, by which noble natures try to evade the horror of eternal misery, as a *fact*,—busying themselves with the adjustment of certain logical relations of the doctrine, as a *thought*, and so keeping away from its tremendous import as a *reality*." And still, it is difficult to see how Dr. Beecher could shut so horrible a reality from his own mind by a screen of such gauze-like texture.

Were the fires of the hell in which he believes wholly material, their reflected heat must have been uncomfortable through it. But he seems to have gotten rid of the common sensuous notion of a literal fire-and-brimstone affair, "which can be felt alike by good and bad," and supposes that the chief source of the sinner's sufferings will be found in the defeat of his wicked plans and purposes, and "against suffering thus caused, the law

of moral sympathy in holy minds does not react." "The physical ideas which many entertain of the sufferings of hell," he speaks of in such a way as to imply that he wholly repudiated them. "They came," he tells us, "from that church which created and administered the inquisition,—that tremendous engine of cruelty,—and which consigned to endless misery all who refused to enter her pale, however holy they might be. Such a church would need to conceive of a hell whose torments should depend on material fire, against which holiness is no defence. Such ideas too," he adds, "have extensively infected the imagination of the Protestant world." Having thus fairly shaken off the outward form in which this old pagan notion comes to us, I was hardly prepared to see him still clinging to its skirts, as the next words seem to intimate that he did. "It is not *merely* positive or physical," he says. "*Much of it* is the result of the disappointment of sinful purposes," &c.

Being utterly ignorant, as I am, upon this whole subject of hell-torments which are to be endless, and never having found any very minute accounts of it in the bible, it would have interested me greatly had our author told us what *proportion* of these torments probably would be physical. Will the material fires be kindled only occasionally, and then extinguished, leaving intervals of comparative repose to the burning wretches, in which

they may cool off somewhat, and the physical severities of their doom be softened in this manner, making up for the deficiency, meantime, by turning an extra screw on the mental pressure? Or will the mental rack and thumbscrew be kept uniformly strained, and the fires, though burning continually, be raised only to a moderate heat, comparatively? A celebrated orthodox revivalist, it is said, used to affirm that hell-fire was so very intense, that a man taken from it and immersed in the very hottest of our furnaces on earth, would freeze to death in five minutes. I never supposed that his information was to be fully relied on, and am rather pleased, on the whole, that, although our author does not allow us to hope that the actual severity of the torments of the damned will be any less than is usually supposed,—what is lacking in material fire being fully made up in additional mental torture,—still he gives us an idea of it not quite so frightfully horrible as the vulgar notion pictures it; not, indeed, as shocking as that described by his own favorite poet, POLLOCK.

“ Wide was the place,
And deep as wide, and ruinous as deep.
Beneath I saw a lake of burning fire,
With tempest tost perpetually, and still
The waves of fiery darkness, 'gainst the rocks
Of dark damnation broke, and music made
Of melancholy sort; and overhead
And all around, wind warred with wind, storm howled
To storm, and lightning, forked lightning, crossed,

And thunder answered thunder, muttering sounds
Of sullen wrath ; and far as sight could pierce,
Or down descend in caves of hopeless depth,
Through all that dungeon of unfading fire,
I saw most miserable beings walk,
Burning continually, yet unconsumed:
Forever wasting, yet enduring still;
Dying perpetually, yet never dead.
Some wandered lonely in the desert flames,
And some in fell encounter fiercely met,
With curses loud, and blasphemies, that made
The cheek of darkness pale ; and as they fought,
And cursed, and gnashed their teeth, and wished to die,
Their hollow eyes did utter streams of woe."

This is an account of torture which speaks to the senses. Common minds can seem to appreciate it. They can see the writhing and hideous contortions of the agonized ; hear their blended tones of screeching, and cursing, mingled with heart-searching prayers to die!—prayers, to which God's ear is deaf, and his heart cold as stone ! Ghastly pictures,—unfit for anything but devils to conceive of or contemplate ! But then, these visible torments speak out in rather too loud tones for most ears, and even saints have a singular tendency in this world to feel a slight degree of sympathy for those who even approximate such tortures for a few moments. I much doubt whether there is a man in one of our churches, so *very godlike*, that he could see the vilest criminal in our prisons roasting in a common fire for half a day, even, without feeling a *little* faint and sick at heart himself. Somehow, intense agonies, which are pro-

longed to any great amount, when borne by those who would seem most to deserve them, will pull rather hard at the chords of a common sympathy. And, indeed, I had supposed that these finer sensibilities of our nature, which compel us to partake of others' sufferings even when they were merited—which pains us to see the blow of justice fall, even when we know that it ought to fall, and approve it too—the pain which a good parent feels as he is obliged to chastise a child—would rather increase than diminish with the elevation of the christian character; and I had felt rather strengthened in this natural conviction from the statements of our author, that regeneration brings us more and more into harmony and sympathetic communion with God; and then, adds, that the moral sentiments of the regenerate imperatively call for the assurance that God so exerts his power, and orders his example as shall meet the touching claims of an inferior on a superior mind. (pp. 30, 32.) “Is not this the dividing line,” he asks, “between the Divine and the satanic spirit? When, in this world, those who have gained wealth, knowledge, and power, separate themselves in feeling and sympathy from the poor, ignorant, and weak, and form select and exclusive circles, as if their superior powers and advantages imposed on them no obligation to sympathize with the sufferings and promote the welfare of those

below them, can anything more perfectly illustrate the satanic spirit of him whose law is selfishness? Ought not the spirit of God to be entirely the reverse of this? Is it not? Could he be honorable or righteous if it were not so?"

These warm utterances really would lead us to suppose that the higher one rose in approximating the Divine benevolence, the more deeply he would sympathize with and feel for those who stood in need of aid or comfort. But, then, our author would, doubtless, say that these feelings do not refer to the *sinful*, but only to inferiors in talents, attainments, and position. The sufferings of the sinful are quite another affair. These deserve no sympathy, and ought not to have any. Still, as I said, even these do somehow excite rather painful emotions in the hearts of good men; and in a few cases, like that of the pious Foster, where these miseries stretch out to the view as strictly endless, the soul revolts, turns away with loathing, and refuses to believe that a *good* being can inflict such torments. To ease the tender-heartedness and morbid sentimentality of such persons, Dr. Beecher has so arranged the system or plan of infinite retribution that even they shall look on approvingly, and no "moral sympathy react against it."

It is really worth the price of his book to know how this feat is accomplished. The tricks of Blitz and Anderson are mere clumsy performances

when compared with it. His position is as follows:

All sin springs from selfishness, as its root. Selfishness leads to cruelty. This is its essential character. Now, to defeat cruel purposes, which is done in punishing the guilty, shocks no benevolent feeling, because a deep "christian experience so reveals the malignant nature of sin as to throw it out of the pale of lawful sympathy." "To punish it implies in God no cruelty, but the reverse." The reader may be tempted to ask here, if given to Yankee inquisitiveness, whether it is the *sin only* that is thrown out of the pale of lawful sympathy—or *the sinner*? True, the question, if fairly considered, may show that the plausible phraseology quoted means little more than the "*presto—change*" of the magician. But it will intrude itself; and is, perhaps, not wholly undeserving of an answer. If our author refers only to the former—if he means to say, as a strictly grammatical construction of his language might allow, that it was the *sin* alone which was undeserving of sympathy, I have no particular objection to urge against it. It would hardly be expected, I presume, by any one, that wickedness itself would excite much sympathy except from totally depraved and vicious minds; but there might be a difficulty in perceiving how sin, if thus impersonal, *could* be punished. At any rate, if it can

be, even let it be, as long and as severely as is thought proper. No pious minds will be much excited about it in this case. But, if he refers to the latter, at the same time,—if he wishes us to understand that the *sinner*, as well as the sin, is of so malignant a character as to throw *him*, as well as it, without the lawful pale of sympathy,—then the *ruse* in the terms is very apparent. By choosing a form of expression which throws the person of the sinner out of sight, and brings the sin, as the only prominent thought, before the mind alone, a virtuous indignation is easily excited, and no sympathies awakened to react against it. A very clever performance, truly!

But, seriously,—for the subject demands it—is it—*can* it be possible that a good christian clergyman should talk of the sinner as being without the proper pale of sympathy? What, pray, is he himself doing daily—aye, nightly, to some extent, I doubt not? What—except toiling, praying, taxing soul and heart and brain, to their utmost powers, to save *sinners*? Is not his life consecrated to this work? And are not his affections, and all the better elements of his being, absorbed in devotion to it? Does he not love—not his sins—but the *sinner*? Does he not feel for him, pity, compassion, tenderness, and sympathy? Dare he affirm that he feels nothing of this kind? Or, if he does, that it is wrong to do so? Or, would he

claim that these are merely human feelings, common to the present state, indeed, but to be gotten rid of before we enter within view of the world of woe hereafter?—as Burns would say,—“Nae *godly* symptom,” but “just a carnal inclination.” I cannot believe that he would really intend to assert this. I will not believe it; and I am justified in this position, not only by the fact that his whole earthly being is consecrated to labors for the sinful, but from the indirect declaration that it is godlike and proper to be actuated by a warm benevolence towards them.

He represents it as a demand of the highest moral principles, that God should not only be freed from the charge of dishonorably ruining men, but should be exhibited also “as earnestly and benevolently engaged in *efforts for their salvation*, through Christ, after they have been ruined by their own fault.” (p. 17.) Of course, then, the more warm and active his own benevolence towards the lost may be, the more does he resemble the Divine beneficence and love.

The sinner, beyond the pale of sympathy! And yet, God so loved the world, even when it was dead in trespasses and sins, as to send His own Son to die for it! More than all this, according to Dr. Beecher's theory, He not only allowed men one fair and full probation in a pre-existent state, but in His great love and mercy, even built a

hospital for the wicked ones, and plies them freely with every possible medicinal assistance. Christ, the apostles, and all good ministers,—what physicians and nurses are provided for these wretched outcasts! Our author goes so far as to claim (pp. 38, 39,) that God really suffers Himself in the final loss of the guilty. “He exceeds all His creatures in the spirit of self-sacrifice for the good of others.” “By his own testimony, He is love.” “He desires all to be saved,” &c.

The sinner, without the pale of sympathy! Can any good man in his senses talk like this, and really mean what he says?

Dr. Dewey, in one of his fine bursts of eloquence, has a passage touching the feelings which a good man would cherish towards a guilty wretch. He alludes to the power of the temptation which has assailed him, and which might, under similar circumstances, have conquered one of us. He says: “The pirate, that dyes the ocean wave with the blood of his fellow-being; that meets with his defenceless victim in some lonely sea, where no cry for help can be heard, and plunges his dagger to the heart that is pleading for life,—which is calling upon him by all the names of kindred, of children, and of home, to spare—yes, the very pirate is such a man as you or I might have been. Orphanage in childhood; an unfriended youth; an evil companion; a resort to sinful pleasure;

familiarity with vice; a scorned and blighted name; seared and crushed affections; desperate fortunes;—these are steps which might have led any one among us to unfurl upon the high seas the bloody flag of universal defiance; to have waged war with our kind; to have put on the terrific attributes; to have done the dreadful deeds; and to have died the awful death of the ocean-robber.

How many affecting relationships of humanity plead with us to pity him? That head, which is doomed to pay the price of blood, once rested upon a mother's bosom. The hand that did that accursed work, and shall soon be stretched, cold and nerveless, in the felon's grave, was once taken and cherished by a father's hand, and led in the ways of sportive childhood and innocent pleasure. The dreaded monster of crime has once been the object of sisterly love, and all domestic endearment. Pity him, then. Pity his blighted hope and his crushed heart. *It is a wholesome sensibility.* It is reasonable; it is meet for frail and sinful creatures like us to cherish. It foregoes no moral discriminations. It feels crime; but feels it as a weak, tempted, and rescued creature should. It imitates the great Master, and looks with indignation upon the offender, and yet is *grieved for him.*"

This wholesome sensibility, which sees and ac-

knowledges wrong; which confesses even the necessity of a *just* and *equitable* retribution; and, still, which pleads for the sinner, pities and compassionates him, sympathizes with his sufferings, is really pained because he must suffer, and will never cease its active struggles *until the period of his suffering is past*, and he is restored to hope and joy by redemption,—O! if there be still one trait of God in our fallen state; one feature of the Divine image still clinging to us, it is this. And were the choice offered me, to take up my final abode with the lost, or be admitted to a heaven of such incarnate selfishness, or cold indifference to others' good, as would allow of no such sympathy, (God forgive the thought!) then,—I say it in all reverence and humility,—give me the former; for there, at least, I might be allowed to exercise this most godlike of all the virtues belonging to our humanity.

The sinner without the pale of sympathy!

Then is the whole scheme of redemption a mockery; the tender pleadings of God with the sinner,—pleadings such as a mother would utter for her wayward child,—merely idle words; the labors and prayers of all christian people highly improper; proceeding, as they must, from a benevolence and sympathy that *ought not* to actuate pious minds. Nay, more, the life of Jesus is, in this case, an inexplicable problem. To that life I

have always been accustomed to look for the brightest and most glorious exhibition of a Divine spirit. The infinite tenderness and compassion of Jesus, which he ever manifested towards the most sinful ; which found expression in tears as he contemplated the fall of Jerusalem ; which was even stronger in him than the love of life, and which induced him to give up all things for the sinner's sake ; all this, I say, is inexplicable on the ground of our author's argument.

Possibly it may be said that I have wholly mistaken the import of our author's language here ; that he merely alluded to what would be the condition of the sinner *hereafter*, but did not intend to affirm that he should be shut out from our kind and sympathetic interest here. I reply : that the throwing of the sinner out of the pale of sympathy, as he expresses it,—regarding him in such a light that his perpetual torments shall be rather pleasing to a ransomed soul than otherwise—is not predicated of any particular state of being, but purely on “*the malignant nature of sin.*” Is not the *nature* of *sin* as malignant now as it ever will be ? And if its malignant nature does not throw the sinner out of the pale of sympathy here, why should it do so at any other time ? Do moral principles change with the changing of times and seasons ? I had supposed that these were immutable and eternal ; and that the *spirit* of all which

they claim for the sinner here would remain the same so long as there was a sinner existing. Either let this be admitted, then, in full, and abide the consequences, or else let it be shown clearly that sin changes its nature as the sinner passes into the future state, so that, whereas he was deserving of pity and compassion here, it will be wrong to exercise them towards him there.

If the nature of moral principles does not change; if this remains the same, as it must, forever; if all good and benevolent beings are interested now in the sinner's behalf, so that there is even *joy in heaven* when one repenteth,—and if the feelings which give birth to this joy increase as we approximate God and perfection, then the sinner can never be without the pale of sympathy, nor the joys of heaven perfect until the last lost one is redeemed.

CHAPTER XIV.

OTHER PHASES OF THE SUBJECT.

THERE is another very important view to be taken of this subject, and one which will prove, as I think, still more fatal to our author's defence of endless hell-torments.

SIN, "in its essential nature," Dr. Beecher tells us, is "cruel, and tending to cruelty in the highest degree." This is what renders it so very odious and detestable, and gives it its peculiarly malignant character, so "as to throw it out of the pale of lawful sympathy." Whatever, then, bears these unmistakable features of cruelty, ought to be regarded and treated in the same manner. No good mind should sympathize with one while in the exercise of such a spirit.

What, let me ask, therefore, is cruelty? What are its characteristics,—the marks by which we may know it, wherever it may be seen? Fortunately, we are not left to any doubtful speculation here; for our author has defined it as clearly and pointedly as though he had foreseen the use which

I wish to make of it, and had expressly designed it for my accommodation.

“Cruelty is that disregard of the feelings of others, *or that infliction of suffering on them, which arises from the want of a proper benevolent interest in their welfare.*”

Surely, this is plain enough in all reason. And, moreover, it is true enough ; and will, I trust, be applied, in the case before us, without the least shrinking or hesitancy.

To inflict suffering without a proper degree of benevolent interest in the sufferer ; this is the very spirit and essence of cruelty. Our author is very careful to guard us against any misapprehension of this position. “It is not enough to prove cruelty,” he tells us, “that pain is caused. This is often done from the most benevolent purposes. In the education of children, to spare the rod is often cruel ; to inflict it, mercy.” On this principle alone is the infliction of pain justifiable. The kind surgeon may painfully probe a wound to heal it ; he may take off a limb to save life ; he may put the body in intense agony for a time, if it will only subserve the sufferer’s true good in the end. So, the kindest and most tender parent may subject a dear child to very distressing chastisement, if he but keeps this purpose constantly in view. If a benevolent interest in the child’s welfare really demands it, if it is seen to be necessary

to his discipline and improvement, mercy, no less than justice, would smile upon the blow. But the first step across this line brings us into the sphere of cruelty. To leave the true good of the sufferer out of view for a single moment—to strike a blow from merely a vindictive or revengeful spirit—or to cause the slightest pain, in any way, that shall not be really dictated by love to him who endures it; this crosses the line between the divine and the satanic spirit; it is in its nature essentially *cruel*, and ought to be shunned and detested by every good and pious heart. How clear and pleasant is the light of this truth! How forcibly is it stated by Dr. Beecher, and how amply illustrated in the highest moral intuitions of men, and in many of the practical affairs of life! It unveils the great central principle which separates *sin* and *just retribution* in their nature and character. The essence of sin consists in its disregard of this principle. It aims to injure without any corresponding benefit to the injured. It may hope to benefit self, to be sure, but its utter disregard of the Divine law of love, in injuring another without reference to *his good*; this is basely selfish and cruel and sinful.

On the other hand, this law of love, which is immutable in its nature as God is—which is evermore binding upon all men—demands that the good of others shall be continually kept in sight

in all we may say or do concerning them. It allows us to do them *nothing but good* at any time. True, it would have our benevolence towards them guided by a wise and judicious discrimination. It would not have us withhold suffering from them when necessary to their welfare, but only to guard carefully against the slightest infliction of pain which shall not really minister to this high end. If punishment is needed for *this* purpose, it will no more hesitate to institute it than it would to confer a benefit in any other way. It does not regard sin by any means in a false light. It does not look upon it with the slightest degree of approbation. It recognizes clearly the guilt of the sinner, and does not strive improperly to palliate or excuse that guilt. But while it views his sin, as it should, in the light of a cruel intention, *it is careful not to imitate it* in attempting its punishment. It visits retribution for a higher and better end.

Again, I say, that no truth can be presented to our thoughts as more fully beyond all question, or that will harmonize more entirely with the purest judgments of our moral nature. Most delightfully also does this great truth find its illustration in the revealed law of Divine retribution. "My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord; neither be weary of his correction; for whom the Lord loveth he correcteth, even as a father the

son in whom he delighteth." "Furthermore," says an apostle, "we have had fathers of our flesh, which corrected us; and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby."

In entire accordance with this Divine rule of procedure, Christ teaches us that, in order to be followers (more strictly, imitators,) of God as dear children, we must love our enemies, and bless those who curse us: recompense to no man evil for evil, but *overcome evil with good*. There is really no other possible way to overcome it. To treat it vindictively, or according to the spirit of retaliation, is only adding to its amount. It increases the gross sum of evil, and benefits no one. This is the spirit of cruelty, and, as a violation of the great law of love, is as truly sinful as any act of the sinner can be.

I know very well that many human laws do not go upon this principle. It is, indeed, mournful to see how utterly it has been disregarded, in almost all christian communities, by their acts of legis-

lation. The first impulse of a wicked heart, on receiving wrong, is retaliation. To injure the wrong-doer as deeply as he has injured his victim; to inflict pain upon him without any benevolent interest in his welfare, and which is, therefore, according to Dr. Beecher's very correct definition, *cruelty*: this ungodly spirit has so far prevailed in most of our criminal legislation, hitherto, as to shut out of sight the higher and better principles of Divine rectitude, such as Christ urged in his teachings and enforced by his example. But surely we can hardly be justified in pleading the wicked example of men against an express principle of Divine law, or draw from their imperfections a rule for the Divine conduct. If we follow the world we may do otherwise, but if we follow Christ we must always render *good for evil*.

I must beg the reader's particular attention to the fact, that the position which I have taken here is not one for which I have gone out of the way, or one which I have built up for myself, but one furnished me by our author in his own terms. *He* lays down this great principle, defines it carefully, and, of course, means to abide by it. We respectfully ask him to do so. We ask him to take here, as in a former case, *his own Rule*, and apply it faithfully to the doctrine of endless-hell-torments. Will it leave that horrible dogma the slightest

possible foundation? Does it not, in fact, render the infliction of unending suffering an utter impossibility? The *rule*, in brief, is this:

1. Pain may be caused by benevolence. This is the nature and character of just punishment.

2. Pain inflicted without this benevolent regard to the sufferer's welfare, is cruelty.

3. This cruelty has the malignant nature of sin, and is thrown out of the pale of lawful sympathy.

Now will Dr. Beecher, or any one else who believes in endless-hell-torments, tell me, in the light of this *rule*, what would be the nature of such torments, and how should we regard the being who could inflict them? Certainly, no man is mad enough to pretend that the infliction of such suffering can proceed from a benevolent regard to the welfare of the sufferer. It follows, then, with inexorable certainty, that it is CRUELTY. And it is cruelty as much more monstrous and detestable than any involved in human wickedness, as God is greater than man, or eternity longer than time.

It may possibly be thought that I use too strong terms here. But can I do so? Can I find language too forcible to represent properly an idea so very dreadful? It is usually thought, and very properly too, that sin in us is bad enough; that there is cruelty sufficiently great in human wickedness to shock a good man's soul, and fill a pious heart with horror and loathing. But what is all

this, and everything of the kind, when compared with the infliction of suffering absolutely endless? If to do a comparatively slight injury to another, disregarding of his welfare, is sinful and cruel, what name does the infliction of that injury deserve, which stretches itself out far beyond human thought and conception, and which so far from being intended for the sufferer's good, *finds its sole aim and object in his intensest anguish?*

If the former is cruel, is not this demoniac? What, indeed, could the arch-fiend himself do, more, or worse than this? According to all accounts, everything which he is striving to do, is to make men miserable as far as he can. And here, surely, he finds all his diabolical purposes more than realized, and the worst feelings of his savage malignity satiated. If he is the eternally hostile and arch-foe of man, what could he ask for more than this result gives him?

How, then, does Dr. Beecher hope even to approach the end of the great conflict? In view of the evident purpose with which he commenced his book,—the vindication of the Divine character, the assertion of the paramount claims of His moral perfections, without which no man can truly love or worship God,—what are all things else comparatively? What are all the strifes and theological warfare which have been going on from the days of the Christian fathers; or what is the

immense importance attached to any peculiar views of human depravity, or other disputed dogma, except as they reflect *His* honor and glory, or throw reproach and disgrace upon *His holy name*?

I ask Dr. Beecher, in the most fervent earnestness, whether the doctrine which I maintain, of the remedial nature and limited duration of human suffering is not, after all, absolutely essential, and indeed the only view which can fully free the Divine character from all ground of impeachment? It does not diminish, in the least degree, the magnitude of sin. It does not enter one plea in extenuation of the sinner's guilt. In fact, these are not the points which I have been dealing with, except indirectly. I have been striving to defend *God* and not man! This I regarded as the highest purpose of his own work. And I should have been silent had I thought that his labors had really gone far towards this result. That they have placed the system of his own church in a better posture, so far as involving the Divine perfections in difficulty is concerned, I admit. That they are a manly and christian plea for the integrity and purity of God's character, I gratefully acknowledge. I humbly thank him for the endeavor. It has been long needed. For ages on ages has a false theology interposed like a dark cloud between the human soul and the sunlight of Divine love. Crouchingly and servile as a whipped slave have

men crept to His altars. Tardily and unwillingly have they knelt there under the influence of that "fear which hath torment." And multitudes of more daring spirits, feeling that it involved a kind of cowardice, have stood aloof in a spirit of defiance; or doubting the reality of the threatened evil, and being irritated by its utterance, have all the more recklessly rushed on in the career of guilt. And, O! how many, supposing that it was really the theology of the bible, have, therefore, trampled that book under their feet! How many has it driven to Deism, Atheism, and Pantheism! Prof. Maurice, of King's College, England, who has recently left that institution because of his adoption of views similar to those held by believers in limited future punishment, intimates, in his letter to Dr. Jelf, the principal, that he felt himself driven to take this ground in order to save the thousands of young men who come under his guidance, from downright infidelity. There is a painful truth opened here; and one which we should do well to heed carefully.

CHAPTER XV.

ITS BIBLICAL RELATIONS.

AGAINST such a view as I have given, Doctor Beecher says that "the bible will ever powerfully react." "There is no reason why the future suffering of such as die in sin should ever end, * * and it (this view) is so plainly sustained by the word of God, that all doubt is removed." "Even Foster conceded that the obvious language of the bible was strongly adverse to his views;" that is, of a limited future punishment.

I enter here upon no defence of the views of John Foster, generally. I do not believe in them. But that *he* did most sincerely, and felt himself capable of maintaining them, I cannot doubt. It is by no means marvellous that, educated as he was, in the most strict Calvinism, and holding to the doctrines usually denominated as evangelical, he should have been little acquainted with the mode of scriptural interpretation which would harmonize the bible with Universalism. The great purity and depth of his moral sentiments made it seem to him as wholly impossible that God should inflict

comes first in the author's eyes

endless suffering on his own children. He therefore rejected this dreadful thought, but without seeing perhaps how every particular of the Divine word could be explained in accordance with his new views.

Still, these views were not so emphatically opposed to the scriptures, in his estimation, as to give him much anxiety. And the question is worth considering here, whether, being forced to his position by the highest and most imperative utterances of his moral nature, he ought not to seriously doubt the correctness of any biblical interpretation which would seem to oppose it? Does God overrule and contradict, by his verbal revelation, that elder scripture which he writes upon the souls of his children? Our author seems not to admit this. He intimates that the foundations of all possible knowledge, having been laid by God himself, in the consciousness and intuitive perceptions of the mind, we ought to be careful how we do violence to these intuitions by any unfounded interpretations of scripture.

This is a very necessary and timely caution; and were it strictly adhered to, and these intuitive perceptions of truth and right more faithfully consulted, I do seriously question whether any one would discover the doctrine of endless hell-torments in all the bible. One fact is very significant in regard to this matter, namely, that almost

every text in the whole New-Testament, which has been thought to favor the doctrine, has received a different interpretation at the hands of some one or more of the orthodox commentators. Some twenty years ago, Rev. L. R. Paige,—himself an excellent scholar and commentator,—examined the more prominent of the standard writers in reference to these disputed passages, and in a valuable book of “selections” made from them, holds the following language: “On some of the texts, it is true, I have not been able to adduce any orthodox authority in support of the views entertained by the Universalists. The number of these, however, is *very small*.” “Of course, it is not pretended that any one orthodox commentator explains every disputed text in accordance with” these views, “but among them all, some have furnished us authority on every text of this description, with a very few exceptions; some furnishing authority on one text, some on another.” This examination embraced some forty or fifty authors, and an exposition that would be approved by any number of them, especially as it was the loss of a proof-text to their own views, might be fairly claimed by Mr. Paige, as showing that the interpretation given by Universalists was not far-fetched, or by any means impossible. It may be added, also, that Rev. Dr. Ely, of Philadelphia, in a public discussion of the doctrine of endless hell-torments,

held with Rev. A. C. Thomas, of that city, virtually conceded every passage in the bible, save *one*, to his opponent, as not clearly supporting the doctrine in question. The exception was Luke 20: 35, in which Christ speaks of the *worthiness* of those who attain that world,—the resurrection from the dead. Were it not for that *one word* “worthy,” says Dr. Ely, I must be a Universalist.

How much support the doctrine can properly claim from the force of that single term,—a term which *neither of the other evangelists* use in their account of Christ’s statement to the Sadducees,—may be safely left to the candor and judgment of the reader. It would seem, however, that so vital and important a dogma as the one in debate, should hardly be left, if true, on a foundation so very doubtful. I regret that Dr. Beecher should have felt satisfied, in regard to this matter, with the bare assumption that this doctrine “is so plainly sustained by the word of God that all doubt is removed.”

Does he not know that many of the most prominent of the early christian fathers did not hold it; especially those of the renowned Alexandrian school, Clement and Origen? The talents and scholarship of the former, no one will question, probably, and I would respectfully ask those who so pertly allude to what they are pleased to term the whims and vagaries of the latter, to read what

is said of him by the eminent modern scholar, the late Dr. Neander. The truth is, Origen brought with him into the christian church some notions derived from the Platonic and Gnostic philosophy, many of which he afterwards modified in conformity with christianity, and some of which he retained through life. But still, if Neander's opinion is worthy of acceptance, he was, at the same time, a man of great talents, learning, and purity of character. These, with Marcellus, Bishop of Ancyra; Titus, Bishop of Bostra; Gregory, Bishop of Nyssa; Gregory, Bishop of Nazianzus; Jerome,—certainly in early life; Evagrius, Didymus; Diodorus, Bishop of Tarsus; Theodore, Bishop of Mopsuestia,—a renowned theologian and critic; and others, are all mentioned by Dr. Ballou, in his *Ancient History of Universalism*, and by Rev. Thos. Whittemore, in his *Plain Guide*, as holding to the final salvation of all souls, and consequently, not believing the bible taught the strict eternity of hell-torments.

In fact, there is no authority for supposing that their views, in this respect, were ever seriously complained of by any class of christians till near the beginning of the fourth century. "In the year 394," says Rev. Mr. Whittemore, "a quarrel broke out in the east, between the Origenists and their opponents, in which some of the latter attacked, for the first time, the particular tenet of

the ultimate salvation of *the Devil*, but did not at first object to the final salvation of all men ; and in 399, some of the councils that were convened against the Origenists, condemned expressly the doctrine of the salvation of the Devil and his angels, though they passed by the kindred belief of the salvation of all mankind without a censure." In the fifth general council, held at Constantinople, in 553, the doctrine of the final salvation of all souls was first formally condemned.

Is not Dr. Beecher also acquainted with the fact that a very long list could be made out, embracing a large class of the finest minds in Europe, since the reformation, who have sincerely professed to believe that the bible does not maintain the strict eternity of hell-torments? Some of these, such as Gerard Winstanley, William Everard, Wm. Earbury, Richard Coppin, and others, even defended Universalism when an act of Parliament had made it a capital offence to do so. Afterwards, Jeremy White, chaplain to Cromwell ; Dr. Henry More, Archbishop Tillotson, Arch-deacon Paley, Dr. Thomas Burnet, Wm. Whiston, Dr. George Cheyne, Chevalier Ramsay, Paul Siegvolk, Dr. David Hartley, Bishop Thos. Newton, Sir Geo. Stonehouse, Rev. Dr. Brown, Rev. R. Barbauld, with his very talented lady, the authoress, and Rev. Messrs. Brown, Lindsay, Priestly, Simpson, Kenrick, Wright, Estlin, Belsham, Carpenter,

Aspland, Grundy, Scott, Fox, Harriss, with many others who might be named as still later, all professed Universalism, in this particular. Sir Isaac Newton, and Dr. Hay, also, are supposed to have strongly favored it.

Does not Dr. Beecher know, too, that, at the lowest calculation, there are a *million* of christian professors in this country, embracing many not wholly unworthy in point of scholarship, as well as talents, who openly hold to the doctrine of limited punishment, besides, doubtless, many, very many thousands, who have been driven into skepticism or infidelity from supposing that the bible taught an infinite retribution? Has he not good grounds on which to base a strong conviction that a majority of the most intelligent persons in his own commonwealth would not acknowledge a firm faith in the dogma of endless hell-torments?

I have no inclination to decide the question as to what is revealed *truth* by popular vote, and allude to these facts only to show that Dr. Beecher was not warranted in broadly assuming what he must know was in reality a position so extensively denied. Some slight attempt, at least, should have been made to sustain his statement as to the biblical relations of this subject. Surely, if the bible is full of them, some passages might have been easily adduced in its favor, but if he has mentioned a single one for this purpose, I have

overlooked it in the perusal of his volume. True, it may be said to have formed no part of his purpose to treat of this matter; but if it was deserving of even his brief allusion to it, it would seem to have deserved also some slight effort at proof. To me, as well as to many thousands of his readers, doubtless, the scriptures appear to be very explicit in affirming the ultimate salvation of all souls; and as the question is a vital one to my whole course of argumentation in this review, as well as the most momentous of any connected with theology, I deem it proper to introduce here, at least, a *specimen* of the revealed declarations in regard to it.

What, for example, can be more clear and unambiguous than the language of Paul, (Eph. 1 : 10) in which he affirms that God had made known his *will* and *purpose*: “That in the dispensation of the fullness of times, he might gather together in *one all things in Christ*, both which are in heaven and which are on earth; even in him.” I think it was a concession of the late Professor Stuart, that the same original phrase translated here—“all things,”—was equivalent to “*the intelligent universe*.” And when the intelligent universe is gathered together IN CHRIST, can there be any who will still suffer the torments of the damned?

The same apostle also speaks of trusting “in the living God who is the Saviour of *all men*,

specially of those that believe." How could God be called *especially* the Saviour of the believer, if he was not, as before declared, the Saviour also of all men? This qualification, which is often used in a very different manner, seems to establish fully the breadth of the former statement. And, furthermore, it will hardly do to say here that its meaning is simply—God is a Saviour *for* all men,—because the writer does not put it in a conditional form. It is positive—a declaration of fact. 1 Cor. 15:22 appears equally explicit, and, perhaps, less liable to misapprehension. "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." Something more than the mere fact of an *anastasis* is recognized here. The text states the *condition* of the raised—they are to be *in Christ*, which, according to New Testament usage, is equivalent to salvation. As all men die in Adam—in the image or likeness of Adam—*just as Adam died*—so all are to be made alive in Christ—in the image or likeness of Christ. Thus, they will be, as Christ told the Sadducees, "equal unto the angels;" and the general eulogium, mentioned by John in Patmos, may be sung, in which he tells us that "*every creature* which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be

unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever." (Rev. 5 : 13.)

Does not Paul assure us, furthermore, that "the creature" (creation) which was "made subject to vanity," shall also "be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God?" (Rom. 8 : 20, et seq.) And are not Christ's words a sufficient justification of this assurance? Does he not declare repeatedly that "*all things*" (the intelligent universe) had been given to him? (Matt. 11 : 27, John 3 : 35.) Does he not also affirm that *all* that the Father gave him should come to him, and that he who came, should in no wise be cast out? (John 6 : 37.) How can these clear declarations be properly and rationally interpreted in harmony with the dreadful results implied by the doctrine of endless hell-torments? And when he utters the solemn promise—"I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw *all men* unto myself,"—can we possibly suppose that he did not intend to affirm the salvation of all men—inasmuch as the only condition, expressed or implied, he fulfilled in his own person, when he died on the cross?

Indeed, I regard this question, so far as the bible is concerned, as a singularly clear and conclusive one; and, although all the biblical declarations which may appear inconsistent with my views of those here referred to, can be, as I think, perfectly

harmonized with them; still, I cannot see how it is possible for these, and many others, to be reconciled with the notion of endless hell-torments. They appear to be as utterly hostile to such an idea as that idea itself is to the reason and moral feelings of the better class of mankind.

To the foregoing scriptural declarations, I wish to add the expression of a firm belief that the famous fifth chapter of Romans, to which our author devotes an exegetical effort of a high order, is one of the most conclusive proofs of universal salvation to be found in the whole New Testament. The same "all men" (verse 18) who came under condemnation, after the manner of the offence of Adam, were to have the gift of justification, by coming into the obedience of Christ. So, too, the same "many," in the following verse, who were made sinners, as it is expressed, "by one man's disobedience," were to "be made righteous" by the obedience of one. Thus, as the apostle affirms, the ultimate result would be, that "where sin abounded, grace" would "much more abound. That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign, through righteousness, unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord." (verses 20, 21.)

The following analysis and criticism, by Rev. Mr. King, of Dr. Beecher's labors upon this chapter, I can heartily adopt, with perhaps some

slight modification of a very few words. "In considering the attitude of the New Testament towards his theory, Dr. Beecher of course pays particular attention to the remarkable passage, Rom. 5 : 12—19. The most of the New Testament simply ignores by silence the idea of pre-existence; but these verses deliberately stop short with Adam, in tracing back the lineage of human sin and wretchedness. The case would be too obstinate for ordinary logicians; but Dr. Beecher storms this Pauline battery, that faces his doctrine with such threatening muzzles, and determines to level it against the standard orthodoxy of his church. He denies that the passage intends to teach that our moral guilt is in any way connected with the fall of Adam. This interpretation was not heard of, he says, before Tertullian, nor established till the time of Augustine. He atones, in part, for abasing the early church before the bishop of Hyppo's view of depravity, by abandoning Augustine and all his successors on the great proof-text of their position, and siding with the earlier fathers. Were it not for this passage in Romans, troops of orthodox theologians would be glad to modify their views of original sin and complete depravity. Dr. Beecher adheres to the doctrine of a universal fall, but upsets the supposed scriptural foundation for it.

After showing that there is the widest diversity

in the orthodox versions of the verses, he maintains that the term "death" refers only to natural death, and that the whole passage presents a *typical* fact appointed by providence to be used as language to state the regenerated influence of Christ. "God was pleased to establish, immediately on the sin of Adam, and through that sin, the sequence of condemnation to natural death upon all men; a sequence linked to Adam's act by no *causative* power, but established solely as a type and illustration, both by similitude and antithesis, of the sequence of justification and life eternal from the obedience of Christ,—a sequence in which there *is* a real and glorious causative power."

The fallen condition and depravity of man are independent of this act of Adam, but the events connected with the introduction of the race into this world by one man, were so ordered and fitted into a system of sequences, as to form a type of the relations and acts of the coming Messiah in redeeming the church. Thus the cure of the poisoned Israelites by looking to the brazen serpent, which had no healing power, was an arbitrarily appointed type of the real power which Christ would exert upon those who should look to him. In almost all scriptural types, the order of causation in the symbol is *apparent* only; the real causation is in the spiritual sequences which fulfil the

type. So Dr. Beecher maintains that the theology of his church has wandered from truth, and involved itself in pernicious subtleties by not seeing that the whole passage (Rom. 5 : 12—19) is typical and not antithetic ; setting forth natural death, which God arbitrarily appointed as a sequence of Adam's sin in this world, as the symbol of the spiritual life which really flows from Christ to all true believers. * * *

We could not but feel something like gratitude for a personal favor, as we read Dr. Beecher's vigorous onslaught upon the horrible interpretations of this chapter. It is not easy to explain the providence that has permitted the Apostle Paul to be held accountable for a theory which his soul abhorred. There would be about as much congruity in hoisting the proem of the Declaration of Independence over a slave-auction, as in making the Epistle to the Romans the banner of a theory which affirms any hostility of God towards the human race, and the need of any placatory sacrifice. Without entering at all into the question here of the strict meaning which the word "death" bears in the fifth of Romans, we will only express our conviction that Dr. Beecher has struck upon the right principle in his theory of typical interpretation. We do not accept at all the details of his exegesis, but he has come into the right latitude for understanding St. Paul's mind.

The worst errors of orthodoxy, we believe, are traceable to a radical misconception of the mental structure of Paul, and especially to an oversight of the fact that the book of Romans is, in the noblest sense of that word, a *rhetorical*, rather than a logical or dogmatic, composition. It does not pretend to give truth cold-pressed into a formal treatise, but it shows us truth jetting hot out of a passionate soul, for immediate practical effect, for the most efficient services against prejudices, that must be offended as little as possible, but which, for the honor of the gospel, must some way be stricken down.

The positive and eternal principles of the gospel, therefore, are not set in a philosophical form, as though the Apostle were drawing a creed for all ages, to be rigidly interpreted by the intellect, but they are interfused with rhetorical conceptions, they are set in historical lights, that will make them most available for the practical crisis which the Apostle would meet, without any damage to their spiritual authority and force. * * *

Thus, it was the object of St. Paul to root out of the Jewish mind every notion of a covenant relation between them and God, that could be suffered to pledge his providence to a peculiar favoritism for them through all history. The proper breadth and harmony of the church were not possible, till this conceit be expurgated from

their brain. So he seeks a universal stand-point, in the first place, which will bring Jews and Gentiles together before the government of heaven. With the latter there has been the covenant of conscience and natural morality ; with the former the covenant of election and the Mosaic code. How do the human parties stand, he asks, as to these common covenants ? They have equally broken them,—the Jews, by not living in conformity with their revealed code, and the Gentiles by violating their inborn sense of right.

If *covenants* are to be talked about, therefore, Paul means to show that neither party has anything to claim from God ; and if God, abandoning the whole principle of covenants, chooses to meet the whole race with a fresh and surprising mercy, what has the Jew to object to the universality of the new system ? what has either party to do, but acknowledge the grace of heaven, and strive together in a fellowship of gratitude because of the common boon ? Such a mercy, Paul argues, has been displayed towards the whole race in the gift of Christ, who published the paternity of the infinite, promised blessings which no soul could have expected on any grounds of covenant, and offered helps to a holy and filial life, which neither natural conscience, nor the Mosaic law, could supply. Just as the mercy-seat in the Jewish temple was the visible sign that God had freely chosen the

Hebrew nation once, for blessings to which they had no legal claim, so Christ has become a new propitiatory, or mercy-seat, and stands as a sign of a freely manifested love towards the whole race; so that all sins are fully forgiven, and a new light imparted to every soul that comes into communion with him by vital faith.

And then Paul brings out from the Hebrew records the universal principles which are implied in their chief documents, and the great types which the Messiah should be expected to fulfil. He shows that Abraham was first chosen on account of faith; so that in blessing the Gentiles on the ground of faith in the christian system, God is only giving full sweep to the principles which the Hebrew records themselves lift into light. Again, the great troubles of humanity are *common* ones, and have descended from Adam, the ancestor of Gentiles as well as Jews. And shall not Christ stand in as broad relations to the world as the first man? Shall he not be the head of a spiritual lineage, including all races, just as Adam stands at the fountain-head of a common sinfulness and wretchedness? Furthermore, does not the Pentateuch—does not the book of Isaiah, show plainly enough that God has always held the lines of His government in His own hands, unhampered by covenants with men, so that He could choose those to be His people who were not His people? The

Jewish exclusiveness, therefore, he argued, is riddled every way—by reason, by the principles of their own traditions, and by the open declarations of the records to which they appeal.

Now, orthodoxy perverts the argument, and mistakes the sweep of this epistle on every point. The vivid pictures which Paul paints to show that Jews and Gentiles have broken their covenants with the Almighty, Calvinism interprets as a mathematical projection of the doctrine of total depravity. Paul's idea that they have nothing to *claim* of God, on terms of bargain, Calvinism stiffens into the dogma that the human race are born under the shadow of infinite wrath. The apostle's poetic conception, in the third chapter of Romans, of Christ as a new *ilasterion*, or mercy-seat, whence God finally dispenses the richest favors to all men who have the filial spirit, Calvinism deforms into the hideous proposition, that Christ was needed as a sacrifice to enable God to be propitious to a revolting race.

The allusion to Abraham, intended by the apostle to lift the Jewish mind above the idea of covenants, is perverted into the idea that the christian church is founded on a strict covenant of faith, which forbids any heavenly mercy to stray beyond the believer in a propitiatory offering. The reference to Adam is dwarfed from its typical breadth and rhetorical magnificence, to the idea of federal

head-ship, or a corrupted nature flowing from that fountain into every breast. And the references to the Old Testament, by which the apostle proves that God has never given up the right to turn and broaden the channels of His providence as He pleased, have been frozen into the dogma of personal election and a fore-ordination that annihilates free will.

If we stand at the spring of principles from which the book of Romans issued, we see a stream of thought as different from Calvinism as the waters of life are sweeter than the pool of Marah.

Dr. Beecher, by his typical interpretation of one great proof-text of his brethren's theology, has called their attention to the character of the epistle, and to the genius of its author, which imply the rhetorical structure of the whole argument, in the light of which, when once seen, the whole system of orthodoxy must change. Certain it is, that his interpretation of this chapter must stand in preference to theirs; and in this manner the door is open for its exhibition as one of the great pillars in the system of Universalism. The scope and point of it, in this respect, are very plain. The first Adam stands at the head of a lost or sinful race. Christ, whom he terms on another occasion the second Adam, stands at the head of a redeemed race. And no other proof seems to be needed to show that the blessing of

the latter is greater than the curse that followed the former, than the strong declaration already quoted, that "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound,"—"that as sin hath reigned unto death,"—(there is no intimation that it will reign beyond this)—grace might reign,—still farther,— "unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord." Thus will the welcome assurance be realized, that "there shall be no more death," and that "tears shall be wiped from off all faces."

CHAPTER XVI.

DIFFICULTIES RESULTING FROM FREE-AGENCY.—MORAL
EXISTENCE AND LIMITED EVIL.

IN applying Dr. Beecher's great moral rule as I have (chap. XII.) to the act of God in creating man, it may possibly be thought that some of my positions conflict fatally with the doctrine of human free-agency, and that I have supposed conditions which are utterly inconsistent with anything of this kind. It may be said that God would not create us moral beings, in any proper sense of the term, without incorporating the element of *free-will* into our nature ; and that if He made us with free-will, infinite evil *might* result from it in spite of all which He could properly do to prevent it.

Now, concerning this matter of free-will, which has probably been at the root of more subtile disputes, sharp encounters, and bitter divisions, than any other point within the whole scope of theology, I deem it necessary to say little more here than barely enough to disentangle it from my main course of argumentation. There is, to my mind,

much which pleads for it as a *fact*, much which indicates it as a *speculation*. Much depends upon the stand-point from which it is viewed. Standing in the light of the intellect alone, it seems utterly insoluble—nay, impossible; regarded from the sphere of consciousness, and the moral sense, no fact seems more fully authenticated. I have stood in awe before the majestic sweep of Dr. Edwards' invincible logic upon this subject, and felt that his argument, in the eye of reason alone, was irresistible; and Tappan, and Jouffroy, and my own soul even, have rose, upon the other hand, and asserted the essential freedom of the will as necessary to that accountability which conscience, the divine voice within, tells me is as *real* as my own existence! It appears to me that there are great elements of truth on both sides of this question, and that, in the light of a higher plane of thought, *the truth* will be finally seen to embrace both. For the present, however, they stand to us much like the two columns of the rainbow-arch—the foot of each appearing in clear and prominent lines, while the top, the point of union, is lost to sight amidst the clouds of heaven.

My present purpose does not require that I should assume a dogmatic position on this subject. It is enough for me to say that I am ready to defend my application of the Doctor's rule to the Divine act of creation from all apparent conflict

with the most *ultra* views which can be maintained concerning the free-will of man. If all the absolute and unrestricted freedom which was ever claimed for him be admitted fully, still it must be evident to every one that he could never, in its exercise, go beyond the embrace of the Divine knowledge. He to whose omniscient eye, the whole panorama of existence, past, present, and future, stand as an eternal now, cannot be Himself “surprised by unforeseen contingency,” or add to His infinite knowledge as the facts of human being are developed. And though I will not pretend to assert that this is utterly inconsistent with all which is claimed by free-agency, yet I must demand this *prescience* as necessary to the Divine perfections. It is fundamental to the very idea of a *God*, and its possible harmony with human freedom I leave to other minds. Taking our stand, then, at this point, and looking at the subject from thence, it must be admitted, as I have before claimed, that all *possible* results flowing from the exercise of powers or faculties conferred on man, must have been clearly foreseen, and must, therefore, have been taken into the account in forming the decision to create us.

And if, under these circumstances, God freely and deliberately decided that we should exist, it was clearly because He preferred these possible results,—knowing what they would be,—to our

non-existence. He chose them *for us* rather than the latter. Again, I call attention to the fact, that the choice to create was purely His own and not ours. He was not compelled to make us at all, farther than that in the view of His infinite perfections it was plainly better for Him to do so. And certainly we could not have sinned and suffered immortal torments if He had not made us. So that, notwithstanding any theory of free-will which may be adopted, no amount of verbal trickery or evasion can make it appear that if, under these circumstances, He saw fit to create us, and our being in the end proves no blessing, but otherwise, then He deliberately elected and forced upon us an infinite curse.

If it should be claimed, still further, that this mode of reasoning, if allowed, would preclude the possibility of His creating *moral* beings at all, although it is but another phase of the same objection, still, I would reply: that, plainly, it would not.

The objection, in this form, would, if valid, assume that a moral existence *MUST*, of necessity, involve infinite and fatal consequences. I see no such necessity in the case. I see no grounds for any. Does freedom *necessarily* lead to ruin? If so, is it any longer to be regarded as *freedom*? And if it does not, if evil is merely a possible result, where is the necessity that it should be

endless? Why may not sin and misery exist for a season, and be finally brought to an end, consistently with our freedom? Is it not admitted on all hands,—does not Dr. Beecher himself admit,—that there are myriads of good angels, and millions of human spirits even, which are now among the beatified hosts of heaven?

Were not these all created with moral freedom? And, if so, then this moral freedom is not really inconsistent with final or ultimate good, at least, not in the case of these, certainly. So far, then, it is evident, that God might have had a class of moral beings who he foresaw would become infinite gainers by their existence. And the question now comes up in this form,—why did He create any others than these? Why did He create that additional class which He foresaw would be endless losers by the gift? This is the true issue now. And I claim that it devolves properly on Doctor Beecher to answer this question in harmony with the high moral perfections which he claims for the Divine character.

Will it be said that the creation of this doomed class was required for some possible connection it might have with the interests of those finally saved? I have already virtually replied to this, in the twelfth chapter. Does not the Divine rectitude regard all men as individuals? Does it not hold the same relation to each individual that it

would were there no other individual in existence? And can it, therefore, properly, sacrifice the good of any one, or number, to the good of any other one or number? Plainly, it cannot. And when Dr. Beecher maintains that God has done this; that he has built the ultimate happiness of a part, in any respect, on the misery of the remainder; or that he has enforced existence upon any number of individuals, which he clearly foresaw must terminate in their infinite misery, is he not reflecting as gross a dishonor upon the Divine character as any which he has attempted to wipe away?

It seems that he regards the common dogma of his church concerning depravity as chiefly objectionable on this account, namely, it begets a "moral certainty" of the creature's final ruin. - He claims, with great earnestness, that should God create man with any constitutional tendency to evil, it would be unjust; because, in that case, there would be this "moral *certainty*" of his ultimate wretchedness. To use his own language, "then existence is to him no blessing, but a curse." (p. 37.) But why should that which appears so very objectionable, when effected through such means, seem so very much better when brought about by other means,—the "moral certainty," in the meantime, being the same in both cases? Why should his soul revolt at the idea that God would entail endless ruin on His creatures through a defective

constitution, and regard complacently the same result when attained through the medium of an attribute which God equally created and conferred—namely, free-will? If the ultimate result was the same, in each case, to the Divine mind, so far as the creature was concerned, where is the immense moral difference between the two, as touching the Divine rectitude and disposition?

Not meaning to confound them at all, in their nature, but looking only at both as God-created, and intentionally conferred on his part, where is the infinite difference between them which would justify him in the one case and condemn him in the other?

Either would be a *fatal gift*, and it appears plain, therefore, that neither should have been voluntarily conferred. Whether it is a radically defective moral nature, or the foreseen result of a will-freedom, the same end is finally attained, and with the same “moral certainty,”—which is what renders it so very odious to the Doctor’s mind,—in the one case that exists in the other.

Perhaps it may be still further urged, that, according to my application of the moral rule to the Divine conduct, God could not consistently have allowed of any sin or suffering at all in the universe. Indeed this seems to be implied in Dr. Beecher’s allusion to the views of Foster. Foster’s views, he maintains, do not introduce relief at the

right point. To say that God will not punish men forever, is no compensation for his wronging them at the outset by so creating them that sin was sure to follow. I answer,—not in defence of Foster's views of depravity, which I repudiate, but, in reply to the objection so far as it involves my own views,—that between choosing for us an existence in connexion with which partial or finite evil and suffering existed, even if it existed necessarily, and choosing an existence for us in which it was known that sin and suffering would be endless, *there is just an infinite difference*, and this is all which the case demands.

When it is once admitted that sin and suffering are temporary ; that God chose the present plan of being for us with a perfect knowledge that they would be finite and limited, so that they could become in his providence *means* and not an *end*, their whole character, so far as he is concerned, is thereby changed at once, and he, as permitting them, is relieved from all imputation of dishonor.

I do not assert that God designed *sin* and its *retribution* ; that is, that he preferred them,—in any proper sense ; but if he foresaw that he could avail himself of the wickedness of his creatures, as in the case of Joseph's brethren, for their ultimate benefit, then it is no impeachment of his benevolence that he allowed it to enter the world.

The principle involved here is fully conceded by

our author. "It is not enough to prove cruelty that pain is caused. This is often done from the most benevolent purposes." Such is his own language, and it is fully confirmed by the declaration of the Apostle that "these light afflictions, which are but for a moment," comparatively, and which God sees fit to inflict,—"*work* for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." In His providence, they all have a mission to accomplish, and are designed for our ultimate good. So God makes use of our finite and temporary sins to serve his own high purposes, and to work out even for ourselves that ultimate destiny for which he formed us in the beginning. Of course, this use of them is *his* work, not *ours*; and has nothing to do in *our* justification so far as our intentions in these things are evil.

If the views which I have thus given, are, in the main, correct, then the Divine character seems fully vindicated, so far as the act of creation is concerned; and His august decision to give us the present existence was in entire harmony with His infinite and immutable perfections.

But on the theory of our author, no less than on that of his brethren, how can the Divine rectitude and benevolence find a possible vindication? Turn it over as we will, and examine it as we may, the legitimate conclusion seems to be the same. The final choice must be between these two posi-

tions ; namely,—either human existence, as a whole, is an infinite blessing to each individual of the race, in which case the glory of the Divine character is plainly manifest ; or, in the creation of some, at least, He inflicted, knowingly and deliberately, an infinite curse, which “ view of the case impeaches the character of God, darkens the whole system, sickens the mind, and renders non-existence more desirable than life.” Well might the wretched subject of existence ask, in this case :

“ Father of Mercies ! why from silent earth
Didst Thou awake, and *curse* me into birth ?
Tear me from quiet, ravish me from night ;
And make a thankless present of Thy light ?
Push into being a reverse of thee ;
And animate a clod with misery ?”—

And neither God or man, heaven or earth, shall be able to solve for him the awful problem ! “ Whatever the depravity of man may be ; whatever theories of a corrupt lineage may be necessary to account for it ; however serious the call to a consecration of the will, that comes to us through the religion of Jesus, it is absolutely essential to any symmetry of faith, that all doctrines be set in the light and under the control of the absolute perfection of God, as the human reason and the human heart would naturally interpret that perfection. If there seem to be any mystery in the idea that God suffers so many human beings to come into existence here, amid hostile circum-

stances and with damaged constitutions, we must solve it by looking ahead,—by believing in an infinite vista of hope, in which all the hard conditions of the dawn of being may be compensated by a greater good which they render possible at last. There is no other way to vindicate the government of a good Creator, no other way in which infinite perfection can be manifest. The human soul must wrestle with every system of theology which does not interpret infinite goodness in ways that fill the soul with cheerfulness and joy, making life seem, when taken in connection with its great future, the greatest privilege and blessing.”

CHAPTER XVII.

THE RULE APPLIED TO MAN'S NATURAL ENDOWMENTS.

HAVING considered the moral relations of God and man, so far as they regard the plan of creation—having seen that the creator could not, consistently with His Divine perfections, give His creatures an existence which He did not see and know beforehand would prove, on the whole, a blessing to them; and, having considered some objections which these views might be thought to involve, I will proceed to apply the same great Rule still further to the Divine economy.

I can hardly avoid expressing my gratification here, that, in the midst of all the rocks and shoals and quicksands, which skirt the track of the theological navigator, so plain and correct a chart and compass have been provided as our author kindly furnishes. The Divine perfections, like some immense light-house, throw rays afar over the dangers of the pathway, and by keeping these constantly in view, I feel a degree of confidence and safety that would be otherwise unknown.

Whatever else may fail, these are wholly reliable. I may mistake their bearing or application—I may be puzzled to find them clearly exemplified in facts and history—I may possibly claim that they demand a state of things which does not seem to exist—but what then? There may be difficulties, there may be many perplexities, the *rationale* of many things may be left in comparative obscurity, and still there is comfort—unspeakable joy even, in the thought that these perfections are no sham,—that they are real, if there is any reality in the universe,—and that he who confides in them with a truly filial spirit, shall not be very greatly troubled with any problems which may assail him.

In view of those great moral principles, which we know must ever actuate the Divine mind, what kind of constitution and natural endowments for man would be consistent and rational? What qualifications would seem to be in harmony with the Divine goodness and rectitude? The general principle stated by Dr. Beecher, (p. 37) will doubtless be accepted here by every one. Honor and right forbid the creator to *injure* His creatures in their original constitution. *This* is plainly forbidden, whatever He might see fit to do for them. Form and endow them as He would, to give them that which He knew must be an injury, would not be right. Does not this fully confirm what has been said already concerning free-will? Would

not a clearly foreseen injury, inflicted through that medium, appear quite as objectionable to the Divine benevolence, as one which was realized through some other process? True, if God should make man with a defective constitution, anterior to will or thought on the part of the creature, the blame would be *His* alone. But, if He were to give them a moral ability which he knew would be equally ruinous, I grant that the creature might be involved in guilt; but still, would that exonerate the creator from all blame, when it must have been deliberately contemplated on His part? Leaving this point, however, with the candor of the reader, let us consider the actual endowments of the creature in regard to other particulars.

“It must appear that God did not wrong them,” says Dr. Beecher, “in their original constitution, but gave them a constitution honorably manifesting his sincere good will towards them as individuals, and tending towards eternal life.” As I have previously intimated, I cannot acknowledge all which orthodoxy claims here, or which our author appears to demand. The views which he quotes from the eminent Turretin, “the champion of orthodoxy,” are such as would naturally be required by a good mind which felt that men were exposed to all the perils of an infinite danger, and, at the same time, that something was necessary to ward off the impeachment which this must

necessarily level at the Divine character. In order, therefore, to seem to vindicate God's perfections, Turretin maintains that He must have given to man, primarily, not merely a good constitution and well-ordered powers, but a strong and constant propensity to all that was right,—to the love of holiness and of God. Man, in his view, must have had, in the beginning, no inclination to sin—no sinful propensities, and no conflict of the inferior against the superior powers. He must have been rendered, not merely capable of holiness, but with an actual original righteousness. If he had naturally any other tendency—for example—if he had any inclination to vices, concupiscence of the flesh, rebellion of the inferior part against the superior, or other things of this kind, such as Bellarmin terms *diseases of nature*, *it would ascribe to Him who is the author of nature the authorship of sin also.* (p. 43.)

Turretin does not seem to admit even that any mediate agents could interpose, and, by putting the creature on a false course in the beginning, secure the Divine Being from all cause of blame. He attributes the first acts of transgression, as do most orthodox writers, to the intervention and influence of evil spirits, but still thinks that the moral course of the creature should have been, for some time at least, perfectly upright and holy, in order to justify God in their endowments. If

their *first acts were sinful*, he argues that the *causation* of them would seem to be directly ascribed to *God* as the *next preceding efficient cause*. But it seems not a little strange that he, as well as others holding similar opinions, should not perceive that if there is any difficulty in supposing that man sinned, at first, without the external aid of a wicked spirit to tempt him, the same difficulty precisely stands in the way of accounting for the previous fall of that wicked spirit. Did he, also, have a devil to tempt him? and that devil also his own previous tempter? This whole orthodox philosophy concerning sin, and the agency of devils, has always seemed to me little better than the Indian account of the earth's foundation. If the world stands upon an elephant, and the elephant upon a tortoise even, it does not seem to solve the problem. In this way, it may possibly be pushed out of sight to him who does not pursue the inquiry. And so, too, all this vulgar talk which we hear about the intervention of devils, or fallen spirits, in order to account for the first human sin, may serve to frighten children, or amuse adults, but it does not go the first step towards removing any real difficulty that may be involved by the introduction of sin into our world. It may serve to complicate the problem, or obscure the thoughts in a maze of

bewildering subtleties, but it leaves the philosophy of the matter wholly unexplained.

The first created spirit which sinned could not have had any tempter except such as existed in its own constitution, and in the circumstances which surrounded it, and it neither increases or diminishes any difficulty which the fact of sin may appear to involve, by supposing that this first sinning spirit was Adam. If it impeaches the Divine rectitude to admit that God so fashioned and circumstanced Adam that he would sin without foreign or satanic agency, then is the fact of his sin wholly inexplicable in view of the Divine perfections. If Adam could not sin, from simply the nature which God gave him, and the circumstances in which God placed him, then how could any previously-formed spirit have done so?

Had he any nature or circumstances which God did not make for him? And if this previously sinning spirit had nothing to tempt or influence him aside from that which God created, and, nevertheless, *did* sin; why then may we not rationally suppose that this was the case with Adam, and with every individual of his posterity?

Nor does it help the cause of Turretin to suppose that the first acts of the first sinner, or his life for a period after its commencement, was perfectly good. It may *seem* to relieve the Divine Being from the responsibility of having given him

either a defective constitution or such an exposure to temptation, as a just regard to his interests would not warrant. But is the relief, in this case, real? Is it a greater impeachment of the Divine rectitude, to suppose that a new-made being could sin at one time than that he could do so at another time? Even if he should live for ages free from guilt, would it not be equally difficult to account for his temptation and fall then as at first? Would it not indeed be more so? For, if a new-created mind had such powerful tendencies to holiness, as Turretin supposes to be necessary, and so lived wholly in the love of God and kindred spirits, must not the probability of sinning continually decrease, as the *habit* of obedience became fixed and ruling? True, if there was a period of active goodness that preceded the first sin, it would, at least, show that such goodness was possible; but it would only counterbalance the relief gained in this way, by making a subsequent fall still more difficult and inexplicable.

And I must suppose, therefore, that Turretin fixes the qualifications of the new-made spirit at too high a point, rendering it almost impossible that he should fall without the tempting influence of wicked spirits, which I have already shown is an absurdity. Still, as I suggested, it, doubtless, appeared necessary to claim all that he does for the new-created being, in order that God might

seem justified in exposing him to eternal torments. And in this, I hardly need to say, he is in essential agreement with other standard orthodox writers. Our author's favorite Augustin would not admit that there could be an original indifference to good and evil, such as was claimed by Pelagius, in which the will was left fairly balanced between them; but maintained that human nature, in its original state, must have been in full and entire communion with God, gladly and willingly obeying him in all things. He even went so far as to maintain, that God not only gave men originally a strong bias to holiness, with reason and the capacities for the knowledge and practice of virtue, but, in addition to all their endowments, he rendered them fully and freely all that direct Divine assistance which their inabilities might demand. How, under these circumstances, sin was possible, seems not so very clear. He speaks of a self-love as first asserting itself in opposition to this love of God, which was so natural and apparently irresistible, and which self-love finally became a strong determination to sin; but was not this self-principle a part of the original constitution, and if so, the constitution so far defective? Or if this self-element of the nature was inoperative without the assent of the will, how was this assent obtained, when the tendency

of the whole being, by Divine aid, was so powerful towards holiness?

It is somewhat doubtful, perhaps, whether I fully understand his system, though Dr. Neander has given it quite an extensive development; and I have doubted sometimes whether the profound bishop of Hyppo really understood it himself. He maintained a kind of co-action between the human and Divine will, in which the lines of activity in neither were well defined, and the whole blends itself in mist to my eyes. I may add that he was a most determined predestinarian, denying all approach to self-sufficiency in man after his original endowments, and claiming that, before the fall, constant assistance from God, in all effort and attempt at effort, was requisite and freely received.

His claims, therefore, in regard to the original endowments of a new-made being were quite as exacting as those of Turretin. Dr. Watts, also, as quoted by our author, maintains that, primarily, man should have his bodily organs perfect, his reason and conscience sound and healthy, and although endowed with free-will, and under no constraint to obedience, yet that he should have a bias to holiness, a propensity to good, and a full sufficiency of power to preserve himself in a state of obedience and love to his creator. He seems to have differed from Augustin in this respect,

namely: that this self-ability was from natural endowments, while Augustin held it to be purely of the active grace of God exerted to this end.

The old-school divines of Princeton, content themselves with a more modest statement. Their sense of the claims of moral principles on God, appears to be rather dull and stupid, and they exhibit no sickly sentimentality in reference to the condition of men in God's government. They affirm only that a *fair* probation shall be given to men, and this fair probation, in their view, simply requires that the prospect of a happy result shall be *as favorable* as otherwise. Nothing more. If men are made with an *equal* chance of being endlessly wretched, it corresponds fully to their sense of moral rectitude in the creator.

What the precise views of Dr. Beecher may be on this point, may be gathered from his remark that the old writers especially claim somewhat more for man by nature than he does; while he maintains that no injustice shall be done them in their constitution or circumstances as primarily formed by God.

The great error, as I think, which characterizes all standard orthodox notions upon this subject, consists in magnifying the original nature and endowments of men, so that God shall not appear to be implicated in their fall, involving, as it does, their entire prospects for eternity, but that it shall

seem to be purely their own fault, and infinitely aggravated by the height from which they fell.

This furnishes apparently a substantial basis for the kindred dogmas of a supernatural regeneration through a vicarious atonement; the Trinity, as necessary for such a system of expiation and redemption; and the just doom of the finally impenitent to a state of infinite despair; the church being, of course, the ark which saves all who escape utter ruin and hopeless perdition. That the prevailing motive in all this is so far good, as it strives to secure the Divine character from all ground of impeachment, will be readily admitted; but that it is in the slightest degree successful, is very freely left to the candor of the reader, after what has been stated—keeping the following facts ever in mind: 1. Whatever original tendency to good is claimed for the new-made creature, is so much added to the difficulties attending the *rationale* of the fall. 2. Would any such endowments as admitted the *possibility* of a fall, however high those endowments might be, serve more fully to evince the Divine rectitude, than a lower standard of qualifications would, which were equally foreseen to attain the same results? 3. The only authentic account which we have of man's primal history, exhibits the fall as a *fact* treading somewhat closely on the heels of the creation.

That the Pelagian view, in general, more especially as it was explained by Julian, is the correct one upon this subject ; that is, in its more prominent features as they contrast with the Augustinian, I do not doubt. It is testified to most readily by the facts of observation and general experience ; and it cannot be denied that it has been gaining friends with great rapidity for the course of the last quarter of a century, and among a class of as good minds and pious hearts as are to be found throughout christendom. The Universalists and Unitarians, with some minor sects in this country, comprise a large and rapidly increasing body, which, together with numbers of the best men to be found in all orthodox churches, and even many clergymen of the so-called evangelical sects, testify to the better development and growth of Pelagian ideas in this most enlightened nineteenth century, than has ever been witnessed before since the days of the christian fathers. And their progress, I doubt not, would be exceedingly alarming to orthodox minds if their *esoteric* history and influence could be spread out upon the face of society.

Thousands who have their views modified on this and kindred subjects, from the creeds of their various churches, do not attempt to placard the fact or whisper it in meeting, but in private conversation with personal friends, the truth leaks out, and finds sympathy and response from every

quarter. Still, so long as other and different views have a *nominal* ascendancy; the work of profession goes on much more slowly than the work of change.

Judging from the best interpretation which can be given to the Mosaic account, and from what is visible in the early history of child-life now, God evidently made man, not with the best endowments which *could* have been given—that is, intrinsically,—but with those which were best in the view of infinite wisdom and benevolence, looking to the great plan of the Divine economy, and anticipating the best possible final results for all classes and individuals. Adam was plainly a *child-man*—a child in his innocence and inexperience, and a man in his maturer powers and faculties. His nature, in all its elements or attributes, was essentially good, and was so affirmed by its author after He had made it. He had given him for his earthly existence a mortal body, and, from his mysterious union with it—a union, the philosophy of which has never yet been fully solved perhaps,—sprang certain animal wants, desires, feelings, and passions. There were also certain passions existing measurably independent of the body, and which either act as forces impelling to activity, or operate functionally for the good of the being in some way; and these, with the propensities growing out of a bodily connec-

tion, are, as the broad sails and winds to the vessel, a motory power driving the vessel continually on its way. Then there is reason, and an intuitive sense of right, corrected or confirmed by Divine instruction, which, together with conscience as its executive faculty, serve as chart, compass, rudder, captain, and pilot; and the being thus primarily endowed, finds himself surrounded with numerous objects of varied influence and power, some leading to good, and some leading to evil, and with an ability, as his consciousness testifies, to submit himself to either. His nature is thus compound—animal, and moral, and rational. Inwrought with the texture of his moral and physical constitution, are certain immutable laws, obedience to which is good, and the infraction of which is evil: the highest good being attained only through the supremacy of reason and the conscience, and the entire subordination of the animal to the control of the moral or spiritual nature. Thus conditioned, when the mind yields to motives which infract the laws of its being, sin results. When it is guided by good motives, obedience to these laws ensues. But, inasmuch as this divinely created being has a nature which is essentially good—that is, not tending to, but simply susceptible of temptation—*good predominates in human life generally*, and there is more of virtue than of vice in the world. Such appears to be the facts which lie

upon the surface of society now, respecting human nature in its original endowments; and such, I doubt not, was essentially the nature and condition of Adam. There is not the slightest real proof that our first parents had any different constitution from what we possess, and the fact that they sinned very much, as most persons do now, seems sufficient evidence, on the other hand, that they had not.

That neither history, or the facts of observation, or a healthy christian experience, go far to establish the prevalent views of native depravity, will be shown in its proper place. For the present, it is sufficient to say, that the proper use of all things given to man, either in the way of natural endowments or surrounding circumstances, is good,—that the abuse or perversion of them alone is evil,—that the normal and healthy exercise of all the faculties, tends to good, and that temptation, implying ignorance and deception, seem essential to sin or wrong; and, such being the facts of the case, as might reasonably be expected, there is a large preponderance of good over evil in the world, morally, just as there is more of physical health than of sickness, showing the essential goodness of the material organization. If this view is a correct one, and, indeed, if some particulars of it are mistaken, all which is necessary to establish its entire agreement with the Divine perfec-

tions, is, simply, to assume that God chose it as, *on the whole*, the best possible existence; that its defects were all foreseen and provided for; that they belong to the incipient stages of what is a great *process*, "the universal law of progressive evolution. The evils, including sin, to which our race is subject, may be incident to a primary, and, of course, imperfect stage of development, and will pass away with the advancement of man in true cultivation and a knowledge of the universe. They may be merely the disorders of the infancy and immature youth of humanity, which are destined to give place to the beauty and vigor of consummate manhood. On this supposition," says a critic, in a brief notice of Dr. Beecher's book, "although we are aware that it leaves many 'terrible questions' unanswered, the worst features of the case are presented in a softened light, and the prevalence of sin is relieved by its analogy with the universal laws of being, and the temporary duration by which its action is limited. So, too, it may be argued, the facts in relation to man's moral corruption, on which so much reliance has been placed in proof of original sin, may have been exaggerated, set forth with too dark a coloring, and made to support unwarrantable inferences. At all events," he adds, "scarcely any explanation has been suggested which does not commend itself to the sound and cautious thinker

as preferable to the hypothesis, which, with all respect to Dr. Beecher, must be pronounced as fantastic as it is ingenuous."

The main features of the view which I have here intimated will be more fully illustrated and confirmed in subsequent pages.

CHAPTER XVIII.

DEGRADATION OF FREE AGENCY.

OUR author objects to the Pelagian view of human nature, on the ground of its degradation of free agency. The experiment of free moral existence has been a failure; that is, if we have its best developments before us in this world. It may be remarked, however, that his judgment in this matter assumes an unreal amount of sin and guilt to be accounted for, as I think; but the best view which we can take of the facts of human wickedness, would, doubtless, in his estimation, imply that free-agency was no very desirable gift. "Indeed, what motive can God have to create free-agents," he asks, "if free-agency, in its own nature, is capable of nothing better than it has disclosed in this world?" I confess that I cannot see the force of this question, unless it presupposes moral existence as an experiment on the part of the Creator, the results of which were unforeseen by him, and which have so far disappointed him. If God was actuated by any motive in giving this freedom, then that motive is fully answered, or

he did not rightly estimate the consequences. If it is answered, then the question is answered so far as I can discover. He saw fit to give men a certain kind of agency such as we term free, and this must have been done with a clear foresight of all its possible consequences; and whatever may be its practical developments, it is hardly proper to speak of the thing itself as *degraded*. Imperfect, it may be; involving, in its operations, sin, as well as obedience, but not necessarily, therefore, debased, any further than such debasement if effected by perversion and abuse. A faculty is not, in itself, degraded because it is misused. Nor is the moral ability or freedom of men to be reproached because of the wrongs in the production of which they see fit to employ it. And however sad the results may appear to our eyes, at present, yet, having been foreseen and provided for in the Divine counsels, as they certainly must have been, the nature in which they originated cannot appear degraded in His eyes, nor can he have been disappointed in His primary expectations.

But if this statement is not satisfactory, is the solution of our author any better? What is gained, so far as this particular is concerned, in pushing back the history of sin to a previous state of being? Has not all the wickedness of this world, even if it be as great as our author

supposes, originated in the free agency of men, even on his own theory? Most certainly. All who are sinners now on earth, or who have ever been such here, were previously, according to his view, spirits who had fallen freely and voluntarily from a state of great purity and holiness. It was through their own free-agency entirely that all this evil which exists in the world originally came, and why should it be regarded as any more a degradation of this free-agency to suppose that the history of sin commenced with the entrance of man on the present stage, than to suppose that it commenced a thousand years earlier? And if the *facts* of this sinfulness are inconsistent in any way with the perfections of God, on the ground that they began here, why are they not equally so on the ground that they began at a prior era, inasmuch as in either case they came from the same source? To be sure, our author suggests here that myriads, and doubtless by far the greater portion of the spirits created in that previous sphere, remained in their originally righteous state, but what has all this to do in determining the nature—degraded or otherwise—which the fallen possessed, when at the same time he admits that the fall was not necessary, but the result of a free choice on the part of those who fell? On the common supposition that this is the primary state of man, the fact of such universal depravity as

we see exhibited "depresses and darkens our ideas, of the universe itself," says Dr. Beecher. But does the fact that there are other myriads, who have never sinned, make this amount of depravity any less? Does not our author's theory admit of quite as much sin and suffering as any other theory? Does it diminish the gross amount of wrong by a single act; or the gross amount of suffering by a single tear? How then should the escape of the millions saved give the slightest relief so far as these lost hosts are concerned? True, if a bright spot on the picture can be pointed out, the attention may be so taken up with its admiration that the darker shades will be overlooked, but does this make the darker shades really less? Why should not the myriads who are now sinning and suffering, and who, according to our author's belief, will continue to suffer forever, be the objects of as much interest, solicitude, care, and sympathy, as though they were the only beings in the universe? Should the consideration that there are others not thus involved, relieve the depression of soul with which these are regarded? Such seems to be our author's argument. (p. 232, et seq.) But I do not regard this as in keeping with the New Testament representations.

The man whom Jesus described, in the parable, as having lost but *one*, even, from an hundred sheep, showed as great an interest in its recovery,

as he would had others gone with it, and the strong declaration of the Master, in the practical application of this truth, that there was greater joy in heaven over the restoration of *one* lost soul, than over ninety and nine which had never fallen, most strikingly evinces the fact, that it is not in the salvation of a great majority, even, of the human race, that the joy of the celestial world is to find its completion, but in the redemption of the last wanderer from the Father's house. Very properly here does Rev. Mr. King ask, "what have majorities to do with principles? In morals, the test of the wisdom and equity of an economy must be the quality and depth of the misery and wrong finally produced by the system,—no matter whether the wrong be revealed in a myriad of souls, or only in a thousand. It is impossible to overbalance the horrible fate of several millions of spirits created solely at the pleasure of the Almighty, by showing us the joy of several hundred millions, whom the same fiat waked to life."

It may be a defect of my moral vision, but I can no more reconcile, with the Divine benevolence, the final and hopeless doom of a single soul, than I could of a million, or any other number. If I could confine my thoughts entirely to the hosts of the redeemed, the view might seem pleasant enough; but how can I shut out of sight for a single moment the agonies of the perished

ones? These are of my own race,—they may embrace my dearest friends and kindred even,—aye, they may include myself,—at any rate, they are members of that great family *all* of whom God requires me to *love* as I do my own soul; and so far as I am obedient to this solemn requisition I am wretched in view of their hopeless doom.

I have labored, as I could, in good faith, to aid the work of their salvation. I have given to it the abilities which I had believed God conferred for this end, and now, in view of their unutterably wretched doom, and with the awful pressure of its dark reality overshadowing and crushing the soul, I am asked, as the only proper mode of relief, to think of the glory and joy in which others may be revelling! As though anything but a momentary alleviation could be found here, or as though the harrowing sight would not be aggravated, even, as the eye turned again to the miserable and hopeless sufferers! To a good mind, if regarded aright, it could be no relief at all that the *majority* was happy. On this principle, we should never mourn over a dead child if we had others still living. If members of our families are sick and distressed, it should give us little uneasiness so long as the number constitutes only a minority. If a steamboat bursts, or a ship founders, or a train of cars is dashed in pieces, or if cholera or plague visits a city and sweeps off thousands, our

sympathies should be excited but very little, so long as the majority in each case escapes!

This mode of argumentation may do for the reason, certainly it will not for the heart or the moral feelings. No christian or philanthropist acts upon this principle. Dr. Beecher does not. If there were an hundred thousand people in the city of Boston, and his church embraced ninety-nine thousand nine hundred and ninety-nine of them, his labors, I doubt not, and his prayers, would be equally as fervent and untiring as they are now, for that *one* still out of the fold. He tells us that "the fallen minds around us may be no more a fair specimen of what new-created, upright minds should be, than the inmates of a hospital are of the normal and healthy state of the body." But it surprises me much that he should not see that all these fallen minds were, according to his own theory, primarily good, and, therefore, that all this sin is actually consistent with a *good nature* in the beginning. All present wickedness, according to his own showing, has flowed from what was primarily a good nature. And it neither alters or effects the fact in the slightest degree, that others, aside from those in this world, should exist, who have made another and a better use of this same nature.

The main difficulty in our author's mind, as I have already suggested, arises from estimating the

qualifications of new-made minds too highly. God evidently made men human—not purely angelic. He gave them an animal as well as spiritual nature, and placed them in a world full of temptations. And, a moral freedom given to such beings, which issues in a mixed character of good and evil in all men, is surely not in itself to be considered as a degraded thing. If it be seen that its results, as we shall endeavor to show hereafter, have embraced a vast preponderance of good thus far, and that the present is only the initiatory step of a great process, the ultimate of which will be the highest good of each individual, then is this free-agency all that it should be, and harmonious with the moral principles and perfections of its great author. But if this life stops the progress, and seals the destiny of men for eternity, and especially if the claims of new-created beings are placed as high as our author intimates that they should be, then there is no solution possible of the problem of present evil, and no conceivable mode of reconciling it with the admitted attributes of God. This might indeed degrade the character of free-agency, but its degradation after all would be nothing in comparison with that to which it would subject the moral perfections of the Almighty.

Moehler's objection, that such views as I am advocating render the idea of any such thing as a fall foolish or absurd, and that they make "an

entrance into evil necessary, in order to serve as a self-conscious return to good," thus exalting "evil itself into goodness," seems by no means well founded. True, they imply that no fall was possible except from innocence into guilt; but is not that enough? What would he have, pray? Must a man tumble from the summit of the Alps to their base in order to constitute properly a *fall*? Many persons have broken their heads without going a tithe of the distance. And I had supposed that there might be a moral fall that should not embrace the two extremes of being—the angelic and the demoniac.

And as to the charge that these views exalt sin itself into goodness, I would respectfully ask, whether there may not be an act of the creature which, so far as it refers to him, is truly evil, but which is still good when regarded by another being occupying a higher plane of thought?

If an incendiary should deposit a quantity of inflammable materials in a part of my house, intending to set it on fire, and I should discover it, and defeat his purpose by converting these materials into fuel, his act, though really evil, so far as his intention was concerned, is to me, in a certain important sense, good. How can Gen. 50 : 20 be interpreted but on this principle? Joseph's brethren intended that their acts should injure him. So far as they were concerned, therefore, these

acts were truly evil, and still Joseph tells them that "*God meant it unto good.*" That is, He used their wickedness to accomplish His own benevolent and righteous plans; and, so far as it answered this purpose, it was to Him, in His providence, a means of good. Now, we may regard all moral evil in this light, without any derogation of the Divine perfections, or any palliation of human guilt. It merely reveals the fact that we will what is wrong, and God wills what is good.

In no other sense can it be properly said that the views which I have advocated "exalt evil into goodness;" and we must either admit that, in this sense, it becomes such to the Supreme Being, or find it difficult to explain this and similar passages of scripture. We may suppose that a certain class of human actions which are sinful are thus rendered a means of good—or that all are—without admitting that God prefers to have any sin in the universe. It does not show that He desires that any evil should exist; but if His creatures in the exercise of their moral freedom, do wrong, it is certainly consistent with His perfections that He should make it the instrument of good if possible. And that He is able to do this, appears to be implied in the possession of infinite wisdom and power. Thus, evil, being finite and temporary, and even ministering, in the higher plane of the

Divine operations, to good, may properly flow from an agency that, in itself, is not very degraded.

At any rate, I am perfectly willing to leave it in contrast with that theory which supposes that mankind were primarily angels—that they have become devils—and that millions of them will so remain forever; while, at the same time, it is earnestly maintained that God, who gave them their existence and all their original faculties, is infinitely wise, powerful, and benevolent.

In closing this chapter, I should like to know what our author means by supposing that “such facts as occur in this world are the natural and *necessary* results” of free-agency; and “that a free-agent is *necessarily* a being of so low a grade that he *cannot* be fully developed” without sin? Does any advocate of human freedom acknowledge that the results of this freedom are *necessary* in any sense, except, perhaps, in the high plane of Jehovah’s thoughts and purposes? That men, if made with the kind of free-agency they possess, and conditioned as they are, *will* sin, seems tolerably well proved by the facts of the case. That, so far as they are concerned, there is anything which can properly be called *necessity*, is not perhaps so very clear. The two ideas may be philosophically true, but we cannot see their point of union.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE RULE APPLIED TO THE LAWS OF OUR BEING.

HAVING seen that God created his intelligent offspring in conformity with a Divine plan which corresponded fully, in all its features, to his eternal and immutable perfections, let us consider whether these perfections are equally displayed in the laws which he has instituted for their government. I am very confident that, not only do such laws exist, but that they are inherent in nature, immutable in their character, and beneficent in their operations,—that their sole purpose was good, and that their ultimate results, when fully realized, will be seen to be equally so to every intelligent creature. In other words, I think that it will fully appear, that as God made men for an existence which should prove, on the whole, a great blessing, so all the laws which have been framed for their guidance will be discovered as fully subservient to this high end.

All this may not be clearly apparent at first sight. Human life, to the eye of a careless ob-

server, especially, seems involved in almost inextricable confusion. Such of its details and operations as lie upon the surface of society, appear to be characterized by very little of plan or order, and often perplex and harass us with scenes which it is difficult to reconcile, at first sight, with a perfectly wise and good Divine government. Health and sickness, joy and sorrow, reward and retribution, do not seem to be distributed according to systematic regulations. Sometimes we see the good apparently much afflicted, and the wicked exceedingly prosperous, as the world reckons prosperity. In some instances, comparatively trifling efforts appear to be repaid a thousand-fold, while, in others, life-long toils and sacrifices would seem to fall as unproductively as the rains, dews, and sunshine upon barren rocks. Some wear out life in sowing, while others do all the reaping. Some bear the burthen and heat of the day, while others, who come in at the eleventh hour, are the only ones who receive the penny. Good is often realized where we should think that nothing but evil was merited, while evil is often encountered by those whom we should regard as deserving of better things. Thus the happiness and the miseries of life wear an aspect somewhat fortuitous. Much of our language, or, at least, some of our most familiar expressions are based upon this false appearance.

We recognize it in the use of such common terms as fate, and fortune, luck, chance, and accident. And perhaps the vague impression exists in most minds that these are realities properly expressed. Nothing, however, can be more incorrect in point of fact. There can be no such thing really in God's universe, except to our short-sightedness.

Whatever the surface appearance of society may be, such a view is consistent only with the blankest Atheism. In the view of a God, and a perfect Divine government, all these phenomena must range themselves in lines of harmony and order. Just as the broad heavens, with their countless suns and stars, which appear to the unpracticed eye as a tangled mesh of light, fall into a regular and musical tread before the far reaching gaze of Kepler and Newton.

We may not be able to appreciate this readily in all cases. Indeed the more common impressions, to which I have referred, show that we do not. Still it is a necessary deduction from the premises. If we admit the one, we must allow the other, to the fullest extent conceivable.

All our investigations, touching the matter, must finally end here. If we take the Atheistic hypothesis,—which is unphilosophical, nay, absurd,—then everything is really fortuitous. We have no right to look for plan, or system, or law, in any-

thing which is natural. Rule or government there could not be, except as occurrences might happen to wear this appearance. And, in this case, it would be irrational to expect anything of this kind. We ought to look for absolute confusion everywhere. We should rely upon nothing future. Even the past should be stripped entirely of its prophetic character. We should have no right to look to what had been in our estimate of what is to be. Indeed we should make no such estimates. We could not with the slightest hope of correctness. Even the Yankee characteristic would avail us little, for who would venture to *guess*, even, with an infinite number of possibilities before him?

On the other hand, starting with the assumption of a Divine existence and government, no possible room is left for the intervention of chance or accident, to His mind. The facts do not properly admit of any such thing. And however convenient we may find the use of these terms when speaking of certain phenomena the reason of which we do not fully apprehend at the time, we should, nevertheless, bear it in mind that, in the economy of an infinite sovereign, no possible event can transpire unforeseen by His omniscience or unprovided for by His wisdom and power. And all the apparent inequalities of life, and the seemingly fortuitous allotment of individuals, must

fall into the order of a perfect arrangement, and conform, in a strict analysis, to the righteous laws of the universe.

Everything in God's dominions is regulated by law. Perhaps it would be difficult for us to conceive of existence wholly without anything of this kind. It is inherent in all forms of being, and essential in the very nature of things. Animate or inanimate, created or self-existent, it is the same, in this respect, with all. Even the Supreme Being, allowing Him all the perfections which christianity ascribes to Him, nay, more, as necessary to these perfections, must be conformed to law. It is inwrought with His nature. If, for example, He is infinite in wisdom, justice, power and goodness, these form the rule by which He is and must be forever guided. And, although in a certain metaphysical use of terms, we may say that He *could* be or do otherwise, to suppose that He *would*, is fatal to all our ideas of His perfections. So far as the certainty of the thing is concerned we may safely say that He cannot violate the principles or laws of His nature. In this sense the revealed declaration must be interpreted, that "it is impossible for God to lie." His perfections forbid the possibility of such a thing. So that, to an infinite and perfect being, entire obedience to the laws of His nature would seem to be fixed and certain. Disobedience to such

laws is consistent only with finite and imperfect minds. In this respect, God differs from us, though there is the same necessity for law in our own nature that exists in regard to His. He could not have created us otherwise, so far as we can judge. He must not only have made us in conformity with the principles of His own being, but He must have had also a plan, or design, in the work; and this implies system, order, and subjection to law on our part. Thus, we find that there are laws which are inherent in our physical constitution.

There are also laws which are inherent in our mental and moral constitution. They have their basis in our nature. They are principles inseparable from our being. For example: we say of the animal system that fire will burn it, the absence of heat will freeze it, or the sharp contact of any inharmonious substances will derange its functions, and, perhaps, destroy its vitality. So, too, of the moral or spiritual nature. Ignorance, error, superstition, fraud, and violence, are opposed to its natural and healthy operations: as wisdom, truth, reverence, justice, and kindness, are in harmony with them, and both show us the natural and inevitable demand of the laws that pervade our whole being. There is the same necessity for law in all human life, that there is in the direction and government of the spheres. This principle

prevails everywhere. The earth in its orbit; the planets in their courses, the nice balance of powers in the solar system—all serve to evince and illustrate it. In the vapor which rises in clouds and falls in showers, in the beautiful order of the seasons, in the growth and decay of vegetation, and in all the chemical processes which are going on beneath and around us, we discover the proofs and illustrations of Divine order and law.

Two general classes of these laws, necessary to human life here, and which are all that need to be considered at present, are the physical and the moral. If there are others, not properly embraced in these, existing in what may be termed the intellectual, or social, or religious nature of men, their character and objects will be sufficiently explained in what I wish to say of the former. I would wish to exhibit the fact, that the same Divine perfections which planned human existence are plainly evinced in the government of the world, and that the great moral Rule which we have been using hitherto must apply here also. It is sufficient for my present purpose, then, to say that having, as we know, a physical or animal system, there are certain inherent laws which belong to it, which must exist wherever it exists, and which can no more change in their steady operations, than those can which hold the stars on their courses.

Thus, the nutrition of the system demands the regular working of the digestive organs; and whatever should wholly break up or impede their uniform operations, must finally end in the entire dissolution of the system. Or, just as far as their healthy processes are deranged, the true vigor and good of the system must be impaired. What I am especially interested in observing here, is, that we cannot have these physical systems without these laws, nor can their legitimate operation be impeded or avoided, except by a miraculous interposition on the part of their author. This we ought not to anticipate, for if the infinite wisdom and benevolence of God has instituted them, the same perfections could hardly be expected to violate them, or interfere in any way to prevent their natural operations. To avoid all misapprehension here, however, I would remark that I cannot accept the position of the mere naturalist, and admit that these laws are actually beyond the reach or intervention of the creator; because it will be found, in the last analysis, that they are nothing in themselves except *the modes of His operations*, and, of course, are wholly subject to His will and wisdom. I only claim that, under no ordinary circumstances, can we look for the slightest deviation in their uniform action and results.

If obedience to these laws gives animal plea-

sure at one time, it will at all times,—if among one race, it will in all races. If an infraction of them to any extent yields physical suffering, at any one time or place, or in any class of people, it will do so equally the same at all times and places, and with all classes of men.

Similar remarks will apply to the character and operation of all the moral laws which are obligatory upon us. If God has given us a moral nature, inwrought with its constituent elements must be its own peculiar laws. These may be more subtle than those belonging to our physical being, and far less easily understood from ordinary experience and observation. Indeed, they must be so; and for this reason, no less than from their higher importance, doubtless, they have been made the subject of especial revelation. Still, it should be borne in mind, that the revelation did not create, but only unfolded them. They must have existed in our nature prior to their being revealed. God does not enact, and alter, and amend laws as do human legislators; and, although there may be special commands given at particular times, and confined to peculiar occasions, yet they all recognize, and are based upon, the essential principles of human nature. They are as real and inherent as any of those which belong to the physical system. Springing as they do from our moral constitution, they must be continually operative, as

well as uniform and certain in their results. No power but that of their creator can ever change or modify them, and even He cannot do so but by a miraculous interference.

In fact, their slightest alteration in any fundamental particular, would require a radical transformation of our moral constitution. For example: if God has so formed my moral system that justice, love, truth, and purity, are essential to its true life and harmonious activity, then to cherish and practice these must just as surely and necessarily lead to its highest good, as any effect could follow its cause in the outward universe. And, on the other hand, assuming that such is my moral constitution, injustice, hatred, falsehood, and impurity, must, with a certainty equally inevitable, produce directly the opposite effects. It is so, in the nature of things, and no power less than the Creator's can ever alter it in the slightest degree.

These illustrations, though very simple, are sufficient for my present purpose. They may help to enforce the principal idea, that whatever God has made, animate or inanimate, physical or moral, must, of necessity, be subject to its own inherent laws; that Divine order, plan, or system, pervades all things, and that, consequently, if there is any such thing as human existence, it must be attended by these inevitable conditions. We can conceive, perhaps, that, had it appeared

equally desirable on the part of infinite wisdom and goodness, God could have fashioned our nature essentially different from what it is, in which case it would have been subject to other and different laws ; but with the nature and constitution which we now possess, the institution of other and different laws would be arbitrary and oppressive. Its own are inwoven with the texture of its being, and are essential to its very existence.

I have dwelt longer upon this fact, and am the more anxious to fully establish it, because many fundamental particulars in this controversy are so very intimately allied to it as to be materially affected by its decision. Thus, if the views which I have suggested are correct, all the common notions of imputed sin, or righteousness, vicarious atonement, or punishment for the sins of others, or a radically depraved nature, or miraculous regeneration, or endless rewards and punishments, cannot well be maintained. The position which I have taken will be found closely connected with all these, and must vitally affect their explanation. For the more full confirmation of it, therefore, I would remark, that Christianity, properly interpreted, contains a very full and perfect development of the laws of our moral and spiritual being. For this reason, its moral requirements are not only expressive of the will of God, but they are a revelation of our own inner nature, and, therefore,

most solemnly binding upon us. It tells us what thoughts, feelings, desires, and pursuits, are in harmony with our moral and religious faculties,—what will give them their healthy and legitimate exercise,—what will be productive of their highest good. And, on the other hand, it points out, with equal clearness, everything which will serve to impair their healthy activity, or tend to their perversion and injury. It makes little direct reference to the laws of physical health and well-being, chiefly because they are less important; because they are more readily ascertained from experience and observation, and, also, because their observance is materially aided by the knowledge and obedience of the moral laws of our being. Christianity is designed, therefore, especially to unfold to us the latter. Their development through Jesus was seen to be necessary to the moral culture of the race. But it is clearly evident that he merely *revealed* them. They did not originate in any legislative power of his, or in any arbitrary enactments of his Father, but were simply perceived by him as existing in nature, and brought to light and enforced through his teachings and example.

When he told the young man, in reference to keeping the commandments,—“this do, and thou shalt live,” he created no new principle in moral philosophy, but merely announced one which was

as old as human nature itself. There never was a time since men existed when such results would not follow such a practice. All, therefore, which can be claimed for the written word, in this respect, is, simply, that it revealed principles and laws which must have existed just as essentially prior to their development as they did subsequently. Their existence was coeval with that of human nature, and Jesus announced them on the authority of Him who laid their basis in the human constitution.

This appears to be in conformity with his own language: "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth." He made no new truth; he formed no new principle; he enacted no new law; but he revealed, by authority, those which the Divine hand had wrought into the texture of our whole being.

There are not a few orthodox authorities which go far to sustain the position which I have here taken. Dr. Alexander says "that God, as a moral governor, has incorporated the elements of his law into our very constitution." Dr. Beecher, in commenting on Rom. 2: 12—16, maintains that God is to judge all men, heathen as well as christian, and that he could not properly do this, did not the elements of the written law exist in the moral

nature of those who had never seen or heard of a verbal revelation.

He quotes Prof. Hodge, also, as saying that, when the Gentiles "practice any of the virtues, or perform any moral acts, these acts are evidence of a moral sense; they show that the Gentiles have a rule of right and wrong, and a feeling of obligation; or, in other words, that they are 'a law unto themselves.'"

Prof. Stuart also says, that "the great precepts of moral duty are deeply impressed on our moral nature, and coëxist with it, even when it is unenlightened by special revelation." Thus, although God has given a verbal revelation to but few of his children, comparatively, still he is impartial in his benevolence, and wholly equitable in his government, having given his moral laws to all men, and holding them accountable, of course, only according to the different degrees of light which they possess. Those who have had the law fully revealed, will be judged by that standard, and those who have been left to the guidance of reason, conscience, and the moral nature alone, will be held responsible only in proportion to their information. This, too, is very fully confirmed by revelation itself, which sanctions our ideas of equity, in this respect, by the assurance, that "it is required of a man according to that he hath, and not according to that he hath not," and that

he who was less informed, concerning his master's will, should be beaten with few stripes for his disobedience, while he who knew it better, and still disobeyed, should be beaten with many stripes.

In closing this statement of the laws of our being, or rather this allusion to them, I would simply add, that the moral faculties, including the religious, assert themselves as authorized to rule the whole being,—as having a rightful supremacy over the animal nature, and that their dictates are urged as paramount by the reason and conscience of men everywhere. In fact, their constitution shows that the whole nature must be in complete subjection to them, in order to realize the true harmony and best good of the system. Thus, Bishop Butler, whom I regard as one of the soundest thinkers generally, in speaking of the lower orders of creation, as acting properly when obeying those instincts or principles which refer merely to bodily constitution and surrounding circumstances, and remarking that the same might be said of men, if they had only an animal nature, says that “*conscience or reflection*, compared with the rest, as they all stand together in the nature of man, *plainly bears upon it marks of authority over all the rest, and claims the absolute direction of them all, to allow or forbid their gratification.*” “And the conclusion is, that to allow no more to this superior principle or part of our nature, than

to other parts—to let it govern and guide only occasionally, in common with the rest, as its turn happens to come from the temper and circumstances one happens to be in; this is not to act conformably to the constitution of man; neither can any creature be said to act conformably to his constitution of nature, unless he allows to that superior principle the absolute authority which is due to it.”

The harmony of this constitution and these laws, with the moral perfections of God as their author, will be still more clearly apparent as we proceed to look into their obvious design on His part, and their actual effects as seen in human life.

CHAPTER XX.

OBJECT OF THE LAWS OF OUR BEING.

THE basis of Dr. Paley's well-known argument for the Divine goodness, will avail us here in determining the purpose of these laws of our being. Reasoning *a priori* concerning the benevolence of God, he assumes two facts, which, so far as I know, have never been successfully disputed. First: "That in a vast plurality of instances, in which contrivance is perceived,"—and the exceptions he shows to be very few, and having no connection with the nature of man,—“the *design* of the contrivance *is beneficial*.” Secondly: “That the Deity has *superadded pleasure* to animal sensations, beyond what was necessary for any other purpose, or when the purpose, so far as it was necessary, might have been affected by the operation of pain.”

Proofs and illustrations of the first of these positions are found alike in both the physical and moral nature. There is the same adaptation of means to ends in the constitution of the latter, that exists in regard to the former. No more

evidence of contrivance is to be found in the balance of the centripetal and centrifugal forces in outward nature, than may be seen in the nice adjustment of the mental and moral powers of our complex being. And as the arrangement of all the bodily functions aim at physical good, so the moral faculties were all contrived for the attainment of this high end; namely, the benefit of the individual possessing them.

“When God created the human species,” says Dr. Paley, in his *Moral Philosophy*, “either he wished their happiness, or he wished their misery, or he was indifferent and unconcerned about either. If he had wished our misery, he might have made sure of his purpose by forming our senses to be so many sores and pains to us, as they are now instruments of gratification and enjoyment; or by placing us amid objects, so ill-suited to our perceptions as to have continually offended us, instead of administering to our refreshment and delight. He might have made, for example, everything we tasted, bitter; everything we saw, loathsome; everything we touched, a sting; every smell, a stench; and every sound, a discord. If he had been indifferent about our happiness or misery, we must impute to our good fortune (as all *design* by this supposition is excluded) both the capacity of our senses to receive pleasure, and the supply of external objects fitted to produce it.

But either of these, and still more both of them, being too much to be attributed to accident, nothing remains but the first supposition that God, when he created the human species, *wished their happiness*; and made for them the provision which he has made with that view and for that purpose." "Evil, no doubt, exists; but it is never, that we can perceive, the *object* of contrivance." It may be "incidental to the contrivance—perhaps inseparable from it—or even, if you will, let it be called a defect in the contrivance; but it is not the object of it." Speaking of instruments of torture, he adds: "nothing of this sort is to be found in the works of nature. We never discover a train of contrivance to bring about an evil purpose."

True, these remarks have in view especially what is usually termed natural evil, but they apply equally well to what is moral, so far as our *nature* is concerned. The moral nature has equal indications of contrivance, and was framed for an equal or still more beneficial end.

The evils resulting from human sinfulness, the Arch-Deacon resolves into "the character of man, as a free-agent. Free-agency," he says, "in its very essence, contains liability to abuse. Yet, if you deprive a man of his free-agency, you subvert his nature. You may have order from him and regularity, as you may from the tides or the trade-

winds, but you put an end to his moral character, to virtue, to merit, to accountableness, to the use, indeed, of reason. To which must be added the observation, *that even the bad qualities of mankind have an origin in their good ones.*

“The case is this: human passions are either necessary to human welfare, or capable of being made; and, in a great majority of instances, in fact made, conducive to its happiness. These passions are strong, in general, and, perhaps, would not answer their purpose unless they were so. But strength and generality, when it is expedient that particular circumstances should be respected, become, if left to themselves, excess and misdirection. *From which excess and misdirection, the vices of mankind appear to spring.* This account, whilst it shows us the principle of vice, shows us at the same time the province of reason and of self-government, the want also of every support which can be procured to either from the aids of religion; *and it shows this, without having recourse to any native, gratuitous malignity in the human constitution.*”

So profound a mind as that of Dr. Paley saw at once, that if the origin of sin were traced back of this mere perversion or abuse, to the *nature* of the faculties themselves—to any contrivance in their organization and arrangement—it would then become a part of the direct design of God. And

in alluding to this perversion or abuse of faculties, which, in themselves,—in their essential nature and design,—are good, as constituting sin, I do not overlook the fact that this results from the determination of the will, which lies back of them, but include that, with the other faculties, as liable to this misdirection.

Whether this *will* ever is, or can be, so depraved as to be utterly incapable of any determination to good, I shall examine into when I come to speak directly of the facts of human depravity. In reference to the matter before us now, I claim that our moral and animal natures are, in their constitution, good; that God formed and fashioned them for a beneficial end, viz: the true good of the individual; that the healthy and legitimate action of all the faculties is right and proper; that their unhealthy or perverted action only is sinful, and that this applies to the will quite as fully as to any other feature of the moral constitution; that God has evinced his moral perfections in this entire arrangement; that He seeks in it the highest and best interests of his children; that his laws are the true mode of action necessary for us; *the mode demanded by our nature; and that this great object will never be lost sight of, in the government and providence of God, until it is fully realized in the perfect and entire obedience of all his intelligent children.*

This will be still further apparent, if we con-

sider the character and claims of the Divine law as revealed in the New Testament. Here we can neither be very easily mistaken in their import, or the design of Him who instituted them. The language of Christ has happily saved us from all occasion of misapprehension in regard to this matter. A brief and comprehensive summary of these laws was given by Jesus himself in the following terms. When asked which was the first and great commandment, he answered, in substance,—“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy soul, mind, might and strength, and thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.” This, be it remembered, sums up the entire claims of the Divine law, and it shows us the *design* of that law,—the *end* sought by its institution.

The great *object* of the lawgiver, was, evidently, to beget the exercise of these two great corresponding affections, namely, *love to God, and love to mankind*.

This, I say, is the ultimate aim of the law, and it will be satisfied with nothing short of this. I am the more anxious in directing attention to this important truth, from the fact, that it is so often referred to in a loose and vague manner.

From the way in which Dr. Beecher, in common with his brethren generally, has treated of it, we should properly conclude that the purpose of

the law as fully centered in its *penalty* as in anything else. We should suppose that its object was as fully accomplished, and its claims as completely answered by the infliction of its penalty on the transgressor, as they would be by his full and perfect obedience to all its requirements. This is certainly a great mistake. It implies that God would rest in the former, as a proper *end* of his government, quite as readily as in the latter. True, the author of the "Conflict of Ages," maintains that the Divine Being is sincerely anxious for the recovery of his lost children; that He earnestly entreats them to turn to Him and live; and still, with all this professed regard, on His part, he claims that the Almighty will somehow content Himself without their obedience, and find repose in the visitations of infinite retribution! But is it not plain, that the infliction of the penalty, be it what it may, can never answer or realize the claims of the law? These claims do not centre in the penalty, but in obedience.

They can be satisfied only with what they demand as an ultimate object, and the penalty is but one of the *means* of obtaining this object. If the penalty itself constituted the *object* of the law, then the law is as vile as Satan himself could have made it. For even he could not institute a worse regulation than one which should find its legiti-

mate intent realized in the suffering of eternal torments.

The law seeks obedience, on the part of the creature, as its sole aim, and to suppose that any kind or amount of punishment will answer the Divine purpose, as a *substitute* for this obedience, is to suppose what seems utterly inconsistent and absurd.

A simple illustration, drawn from our earthly parental rule, will evince this clearly. We command the obedience of a child to certain regulations which are instituted solely with a view to the child's good. We claim his conformity to our requirements on the ground of his benefit. This is our ultimate purpose, and we know that it cannot be attained without his submission to the laws we have given. Now, why, in this case, should any penalty be instituted at all? Do we not annex this to the command solely with a view to make the command effectual? But effectual in what? Of course, in realizing the great purpose we continually have in view, viz: the child's benefit through obedience. We are never content to stop short of this. And all penalties affixed to our commands, and the infliction of them, in case of the laws' violation, are all but means to a higher end which we have had in view from the beginning.

The child, being weak and unknowing, in com-

parison with ourselves, it is right and good that we should direct it in its proper course. For its benefit, we begin our government, and for the same high purpose we carry on this government, making all its parts subservient to this one great object. We neither threaten it with, or inflict upon it, a single blow that is not designed for something higher and better than the infliction of retribution, and we should scorn and despise, nay, we should cage up, the human monster who would do it! Such is the proper exercise of government on the part of earthly parents everywhere.

But if this has received the sanction of all the best minds, in ordinary parental control, is it not, therefore, an established *principle*, fixed by the exercise of our best and most enlightened moral judgments? Can it be deviated from, essentially, without violating our highest intuitions of rectitude? And how shall we decide on what is just and proper in the Divine administration except it be through these? Dr. Beecher has fully justified this course of procedure, so far as it needed justification, and I now ask that the decision of these moral sentiments in us be applied to the operations of the Divine law. That law assumes to have been instituted for our benefit. Otherwise, it is not properly obligatory upon us. And being established with this end in view, can either reward or punishment be anything more than *means* to this ultimate end?

In one sense, it may be said, truly, that the law claims the infliction of punishment on its violator. But is this *all* it claims? Does it not also still claim his obedience, even when he is suffering the penalty? Now if the infliction of the penalty satisfied the full demands of the law, then its claims would cease when this penalty was inflicted. But the fact that they do not; that they remain in full force against the delinquent, even while he is suffering retribution for its violation, shows us that it aims at something beyond mere suffering, viz: the good of the being punished. This may be exhibited in the infraction of a physical law. If we burn a limb, the pain which follows may be regarded as the punishment for the violation of a natural law; but does the law seek nothing beyond this? Is it not equally incumbent upon us to observe that law while we are suffering the penalty of its violation as it was before? And does not this fact clearly and conclusively show us that the ultimate aim of the law,—its primary and sole object can be realized only in obedience,—and that no amount of pain will ever be accepted as a substitute for this obedience?

The same principle holds good in God's moral government. His moral law claims love to Him and love to all mankind, and it will never cease in these claims until its highest demands are met in the perfect love and obedience of all souls.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE PENALTY OF THE DIVINE LAW.

WE have contemplated, to some little extent, the *object* of the moral law of God. We have seen that, like the physical, it finds its true and proper basis in the elements of our moral nature. We have seen that it was instituted solely for a beneficial end, viz : the best good of the creature ; that it claims the creature's obedience on this ground ; that no substitute will answer in room of this obedience ; and that to presume that the law-giver will rest in the infliction of the penalty, merely, is a confounding of *means* with *ends* that is incompatible with a perfect, or even with a tolerably good government.

These views will find still stronger confirmation if we proceed to consider more fully the character of a righteous penalty. The great error, common to our author and others, upon this subject, consists in treating of the law and its penalty, both, as though they were wholly arbitrary, founded

in the will of their great author, and having no other object but His own pleasure.

God, as an infinite sovereign, it is assumed, had a perfect right to institute such laws as he pleased, and affix whatever penalties to their violation he might deem proper.

Now if it be meant by this assumption, merely, that whatever laws and penalties were consistent with His character and disposition, might be properly established, I have no wish to find fault with the statement; but if it be intended, that He is justified in instituting regulations regardless of the moral perfections of His own being, then it is, evidently, a false assumption, and one which does Him gross dishonor. Just as surely as He is under obligation to act in conformity with the great rule we have been considering, in any case, so surely is He under obligation to do so in this case.

If He should not violate the principles involved in this rule, in one way, then He should not do so in any way. In establishing laws for our guidance, and in affixing the penalties to these laws, surely, if He is to abide by the principles of rectitude and benevolence, in any instance, it should be in regard to these. They should be carefully arranged with a wise and benevolent view to our welfare, and should seek this as a paramount object throughout. What our highest moral intuitions

would sanction in a good earthly parent's rule of his children, we may safely attribute to His government, so far as principles are concerned; and that from which we should shrink, in utter loathing, if seen in an earthly parent, should never be authorized as a part of His economy. Thus, the basis of just parental authority, with us, is found in the inferiority and dependence of the child, on the one hand, and the superiority and ability of the parent, on the other, calling on the parental wisdom and benevolence for guidance. And as the foundation of our government, in this case, is the benefit of the child, so all its regulations must keep this end constantly in view.

If an earthly parent were to call upon his child to throw itself into the fire, with no other view than to render the child miserable, evidently, it would be wholly absolved from all allegiance to the parent's authority in this case.

Or if the parent should threaten the child with death by slow torture for some trivial act of offence, it would be equally an arbitrary and unjust control. A parental government, such as would find a sanction in the best human minds, would institute no laws but for the sole good of the governed, and visit no penalties which were not benevolently designed to help in attaining this result. And, furthermore, it is equally the demand of our moral judgment that penalties should be

exactly proportioned to the magnitude of offences, in all cases. Any great deviation from this rule, would be condemned, at once, by every good mind in the government of an earthly parent.

Taking these, then, as established principles, let us apply them faithfully to the Divine government. It is one of the noblest traits of christianity that it reveals God as the Father of all men, and we must, therefore, regard His government as wholly and truly parental. His own command to the sinner is, "My son, give me thine heart;" while He declares, of all such, "I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me." Christ taught the sinner to pray, saying, "Our Father, * * * forgive us our sins." God thus acknowledges His parental relationship to the sinful, and His moral rule over them is that of an infinite and perfect Father. It follows, then, necessarily, that He has given no laws but such as are graciously designed for human benefit, and they find the just grounds of their authority in this fact. They are given to conduct His children to the attainment of the highest possible good, consistent with their nature, in the full and perfect love of Him, and of all mankind.

Now, looking at the subject, *a priori*, is it rational to suppose that, under these circumstances, He would affix a penalty to His laws

the infliction of which would be totally inconsistent with the object of the law, and which, indeed, would forbid that that object should ever be realized? Where could be found an excuse for *such* a penalty? Where are the reasons for it? and what spirit or disposition could institute it? It could be only an arbitrary and unjust power which could establish such a penalty to begin with, and an equally dishonorable spirit of malice or revenge which could consent to inflict it. It is not wonderful by any means that, accustomed as men are to practice retaliation among themselves—to injure one who has injured them—and to do this with no benevolent spirit or intention—they should easily fall into the habit of thinking that God would act on the same principle. And this, I apprehend, is the true source from which those erroneous views of the Divine government have proceeded, and in which they still find their main support. If men were not moved by this wicked impulse themselves—if revenge was not usually considered as sweet to their cruel hearts—they could never so easily be made to uphold dogmas which make the Divine government rest upon the principle of rendering evil for evil. But still, if they will consult their own better nature—if they will question their moral judgment when calm and dispassionate—they will see and acknowledge that this principle

is wholly wrong; that "it constitutes the dividing line between the Divine and the Satanic spirit," and should never be allowed to throw its disgrace upon the Divine character.

Equity, no less than benevolence, in the Divine nature, requires that all penalties should bear an exact proportion to the magnitude of offences committed, and that they should be instituted as *means* to attain the higher purposes of the law which are to be realized only in obedience. None of any different kind or character could find a sanction in the Divine perfections.

So very evident are the principles which are involved in this argument, that I find Dr. Paley resorting to them, in order to reconcile the penalties annexed to the violation of natural laws, with the Divine goodness, or, rather, he argues the Divine benevolence from the fact that all such penalties are *remedial* in their nature.

"Of bodily pain," he says, "that it is seldom the object of contrivance; that, when it is so, the contrivance rests ultimately in good." And he adds, "that the annexing of pain to the means of destruction is a salutary provision, inasmuch as it teaches vigilance and caution: both gives notice of danger, and excites those endeavors which may be necessary to preservation." He illustrates the evil consequence which sometimes arises from the want of that timely intimation of danger which

pain gives, by the example of injuries from frost in cold regions, in which the victim is hardly warned of his danger until, perhaps, his limbs are totally destroyed. Still further, he says, "I believe, also, that the use (of pain) extends further than we suppose, or can now trace; that to disagreeable sensations, we, and all animals, owe, or have owed, many habits of action which are salutary, but which are become so familiar as not easily to be referred to their origin."

The eminent Bishop Butler expresses a similar view in the following terms. Speaking of the lesser pains, as instances of the Divine punishment, he says, "there is no possibility of answering or evading the general thing here intended, without denying all final causes. For, final causes being admitted, the pleasures and pains now mentioned must be admitted too as instances of them. And if they are, if God annexes delight to some actions and uneasiness to others, *with an apparent design to induce us to act so and so*, then he not only dispenses happiness and misery, but also *rewards and punishes* actions. If, for example, the pain which we feel upon doing what tends to the destruction of our bodies, suppose upon too near approaches to fire, or upon wounding ourselves, be *appointed by the Author of Nature to prevent our doing what thus tends to our destruction*: this is altogether as much an instance of his

punishing our actions, * * * as declaring, by a voice from heaven, that if we acted so, he would inflict such pain upon us, and inflicting it whether it be greater or less."

Essentially the same view, also, has been ably supported by George Combe. He says that "several important principles strike us very early in attending to the natural laws,"—in which he embraces the laws of the moral nature,—“viz : 1st. Their independence of each other ; 2dly. That obedience to each of them is attended with its own reward, and disobedience with its own punishment ; 3dly. That they are universal, unbending, and invariable in their operation ; 4thly. That they are in harmony with the constitution of man.” And in speaking of the *remedial* character of punishment, he says, that “when sickness and pain follow a debauch, the object of the suffering is to urge a more scrupulous obedience to the organic laws, that the individual may escape premature death ; which is the inevitable consequence of too great and continued disobedience to those laws,—and enjoy health, which is the reward of the opposite conduct.

“When discontent, irritation, hatred, and other mental annoyances, arise out of infringement of the moral law, this punishment is calculated to induce the offender to return to obedience, that he may enjoy the rewards attached to it.”

These statements evidently involve all that I have claimed in this case, so far as principles are concerned, and it is equally evident that, if my position is allowed, we have no antagonism to encounter between the principles of the Divine government, and the rectitude and benevolence of the Supreme Being. It will be seen that there is a clear strain of harmony running through the whole of God's economy, in reference to man, and while it inclines us to prostrate ourselves in adoration of His infinite wisdom, it also thrills us with deep and pleasant convictions of His far-reaching benevolence.

We perceive that He has had a continual regard to the best welfare of His creatures, and we can understand the singular beauty of many of His declarations, in which He assures us that He does not afflict willingly—that is, for the sake of our suffering merely—but that He chastens us *for our profit*, that we may be partakers of His holiness. And, I may add, that there is, also, a clear rationality in these views, which serves to commend them to minds in which reason predominates, and which find it difficult to incorporate in the bonds of a strong faith, elements that are offensive to the intellect or repugnant to the sentiments of the heart.

The foregoing statements appear to justify the following corollaries. First. If the moral like the

physical laws, find their true basis in our constitution; if they are merely indicative of that course of life or practice which our nature demands in view of its true good, then no violations of them are possible except such as meet with a just and equitable retribution. This retribution must exactly proportion itself to the amount of the offence, and act remedially upon the moral health of the transgressor.

On the other hand, no obedience is possible but what is attended with its adequate reward. This reward must necessarily be equal in amount to the obedience rendered, and like the punishment for disobedience, is inevitable, and cannot be avoided, except by a miraculous interference on the part of the Creator. One sole object, therefore, prevails in the institution and administration of the Divine law, viz: the benefit of its subjects. Secondly: Sin, like obedience, being entirely personal, can never be imputed in any proper sense of the term. The offences of each being are its own, and to call them the offences of another, is as repugnant to our reason as it is objectionable to our moral judgments. Neither can there be any vicarious suffering for sin that can be termed punishment. For if each sinner must, of necessity, suffer for his own sins, all the punishment which is due for them, then it follows that no one else can bear it for him. One being can no more

bear the punishment for another's sins, than he can commit those sins for him. Either involves a moral impossibility. An innocent being may suffer on account of other's wrongs, as we see they do, in a variety of ways, every day, but not as a *punishment*, unless he has also been involved in the commission of those wrongs, in which case they become so far his own.

Thirdly: Forgiveness can never be supposed to extend to the just retribution which the sinner's wrongs have merited. This retribution is a necessary part of his discipline, and as it is demanded by a just regard to the sinner's good, to interfere for its prevention would be improper as well as unjust.

Forgiveness, therefore, can only extend to *sin*, and is, as its original meaning indicates, the taking away, or removing of sin. One form of the original word translated forgiven, occurs in the declaration: "Behold, the Lamb of God, which *taketh away* the sins of the world." And this view is confirmed by the fact that forgiveness of punishment is nowhere spoken of in the bible, but forgiveness of sin only.

Fourthly: The atonement is not a placatory sacrifice made to appease the Divine Being, but such a manifestation of the Divine love as will lead to the reconciliation of the world to God. A being who was literally an enemy to the sinner,

could never institute means for his redemption, or provide an offering for propitiating himself. And I may add, that one who would be really angry at the sins of his creatures, and pretend to feel kindly towards them simply on account of the sufferings of an innocent victim, is such an one as no man could intelligently love or worship. God was never angry or unkind towards the sinner, as we ordinarily use these terms; but so loved the world, even when it was dead in sins, that He sent His Son to save it. "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself."

Fifthly : The more common notion, that rewards and punishments are strictly eternal, or without end, cannot be true. They can only become so by an arbitrary exercise of the Divine will, which would be wholly inconsistent with either equity or benevolence; and could be designed for no other end, so far as the latter is concerned, than the gratification of a malignant and retaliatory spirit. And as God commands us to overcome evil with good, and, as Dr. Beecher admits that He will never violate his own laws, this supposition is wholly inadmissible.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE DEATH PENALTY.

WHEN an ordinary orthodox dogma, or interpretation, stands in the way of our author's view, it is not a little amusing, to those who have labored at the work themselves, to see the apparent ease with which he modifies, batters down, or brushes them away, as may best suit his feelings or purpose in the case. This is partly owing, doubtless, to the strength of his own arm, but quite as much, perhaps, to the frail materials against which he deals. I was peculiarly struck with this fact in looking over his argument on the death penalty threatened to Adam. (p. 411, et seq.)

It is well known that this has usually been supposed to embrace a three-fold signification, namely, death temporal, death spiritual, and death eternal. But a few words of criticism show how very baseless the views of his church are, so far as any authority from the text in Genesis is concerned. And although he claims that the penalty is summed up in what he terms "natural death," by

which I understand him to mean the death of the body, still, I could not help suspecting that, had his theory admitted it, it would have been equally easy to show that natural death formed no part of the penalty whatever, except in a very modified sense, and this wholly secondary. Its ordinary interpretation, as embracing eternal death, is overstrained and wholly unwarranted.

The simple declaration made to Adam, was, that at the very period of his transgression, he should surely *die*. And it would no more strain or pervert this original statement to claim that it intended banishment in this life to Siberia or Botany Bay, than to maintain that it included the idea of a hopeless doom for the sinful hereafter. This Dr. Beecher shows very clearly. But that the death of the body was referred to, as he supposes, is not so very apparent.

There may be some little ambiguity in the meaning of the word death. Its primary signification, as used, commonly, is that which our author gives it. But I do not think that it will bear this interpretation if used as a translation of the original in Genesis. There are certain facts which stand in the way of it. First: The natural death of Adam did not, according to the Mosaic account, occur at a period so near that of his sin, as to come within the proper meaning of the phrase, "in the day." It was "in the day" of his trans-

gression, that it was declared he should die. Secondly: The interpretation in question supposes that his natural body was created immortal, and that its death, without sin, could never have been expected. Thirdly: The account which we have of this matter is not such an one as to correspond¹ to this opinion, nor does it appear at all consistent with it.

1. The phrase, "in the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die," might, possibly, if other good reasons required it, embrace a period of time greater than what we usually signify by the term day, viz: twenty-four hours. The original of the passage being equivalent, perhaps, to "dying, thou shalt die," rather indicates a *process* than a single event. If moral death, a death to his former innocence and purity and peace, was intended by the declaration, as I believe it was, then it might very properly admit of degrees in point of depth, and be somewhat gradual in its consummation. As Adam became estranged from his Creator by the course of sinning which merely began with the first act of disobedience, his spiritual deadness would become more profound ultimately, and, thus, although that first act might of itself be termed death, yet the completion of his degradation in subsequent life might have been taken into the account, and the whole intimated in the original statement of the penalty. But if natural

death was intended, then the removal of the entire penalty to the distance of almost a thousand years, (for Adam was said to have lived nine hundred and thirty years) would hardly seem to be properly described as taking place *in the day* of transgression.

2. Still more difficult is it for us to admit that Adam's body was originally immortal, which would be implied in case its dissolution was the effect of his sin. The common notion that sin brought death into the world, that is, natural death, must be a misapprehension, as geology abundantly testifies. It is not the first hoary error which the light of science has dispelled, and will not, probably, be the last. The different strata of the earth, which have given up their remains, show us conclusively that long ages, almost inconceivable in duration, passed away prior to the introduction of man here; and the fossil remnants of these ages testify, in the most unmistakable language, that the kind of death which is the extinction of animal life, was no stranger in our world when the first human being passed away. Countless forms and races of animate being, lived and *died* long before sin was conceived of, except by the Divine prescience, and of course, natural death could not have had its origin in this source.

Furthermore, had the bodies of human beings been immortal and designed for a perpetual exist-

ence here, in case sin had not entered to prevent it, it would seem to involve a physical impossibility which would be difficult of explanation. Where would have been found room for all those who have already been born? Even this number would cover the entire portion of the habitable globe with a solid body of vast depth, and, consequently, some plan must have been devised for their removal, or to put a stop to their further introduction here thousands of years ago. Many other considerations present themselves here, that it is unnecessary to mention, and that render this theory highly improbable, not to say impossible. It involves too many difficulties.

3. The only authentic account of this matter, to which we have access, viz: that attributed to Moses, is inconsistent with the idea of a physical penalty of this character. If Adam's body was created immortal, then, on the occasion of his sinning, God must have changed it by the miraculous exercise of his power and rendered it mortal. Was an event so momentous and so unnatural, not worthy even an allusion, or remote hint, by the Divine historian? So far from his dropping a word that would intimate so important a change, his simple statement seems directly against it. For, on pronouncing the curse upon Adam, only the ordinary difficulties and trials of this life are referred to, and these, it was said, he must suffer

until he returned to the ground only? But why was he to return unto the ground? Not because he had sinned, surely, for the writer assigns another reason, viz: "out of it wast thou taken,"—"dust thou art, and unto dust must thou return."

This was the reason of his natural death. It was because he was formed of the dust, mortal and perishable, that he was to return to the dust, and meantime he was to suffer many privations and hardships as a proper punishment for his disobedience.

That pain, sickness, and premature death, are often the result of sinful practices, is readily admitted, but they occur from the violation of physical laws, and are, very properly, physical punishments, in these cases. But to punish moral offences in this manner, is not according to the rules of the Divine government.

In God's economy, as we have already seen, each class of laws has its independent nature and operation, and the penalty for their violation will conform to the kind of the law violated. To punish a moral offence physically, or a physical offence morally, would be improper. Though, in most cases, perhaps, where there is an infraction of the laws of either class, both are affected somewhat, and the penalty will accordingly be of a mixed character.

It has puzzled me somewhat to understand how

Dr. Beecher would explain the fact of natural death, as the penalty of Adam's sin, consistently with his own peculiar theory. Was it for the sin of his pre-existent state? If so, had he any knowledge of the fact at the time? And would not such knowledge have been necessary in justice to him originally? We cannot suppose that any portion of the penalty was concealed from him in the beginning. It must, then, be regarded as wholly belonging to his sin in the present life. It was for his sin here that this doom was inflicted upon him. But how, in this case, can our author account for the death of little children, before the period of will or action begins? They do not die for their own personal sins here, for they do not commit any. And if he claims that they die for Adam's sin, will he not be involved in all the terrible difficulties which he charges upon the views of his brethren? Is it not as easy to reconcile, with the perfections of God, the bestowment of a sinful nature on the new-born child, in consequence of Adam's sin, as the infliction of natural death for the same reason?

Regarding the penalty, however, as moral in its nature—viewing sin as the disease of the soul, the deadening of the elements of moral life within us—all these difficulties are avoided. We find, in this case, that its infliction corresponds, in point of time, to that named in giving the law. The death

must attend the sin, and be equivalent to it. Its nature, also, is seen to be in harmony with the nature of the law, and it fully answers to the account given by Moses, and all we know of the facts of the case. The greatest objection, after all, which I have to our author's views on this subject, or indeed to the common views generally respecting it, is of a practical character. This regarding of sin and its punishment, as wholly separate and distinct in their nature,—not necessarily connected with each other,—has proved exceedingly pernicious in many respects. It has given occasion, not only for the supposition that the one could exist properly in this state of being, and the other be postponed to the future state, but that very possibly the latter may be escaped altogether! The sinner, under the influence of this fatal delusion, carries about with him the vague impression that a life of sin is a more pleasant one than a life of holiness, and that by repentance and forgiveness he may escape the consequences hereafter; and thus he persists in his wayward and wicked course, and the church complains that he is insensible to his danger, and can only be aroused from it by appeals to his fears at the possible near approach of death. Why should he not be, when it furnishes him with all the inducements to do so? If he could only be as fully and thoroughly convinced that the death,

which is the proper penalty for sin, was as necessary and certain as the pain which follows the burning of his body, why should he yield to its temptations any sooner than he would thrust his hands into the fire? It may be difficult to fix such a belief equally as impressive in the former as in the latter case, for the consequences of violating a physical law are more palpable and striking, but they are no more real, and not as deeply ruinous. And so far as this conviction can be rendered deep and abiding, so far the power of temptation to sin is broken, and the door to its commission closed and sealed. Why does not the Almighty find it necessary to attach penalties to the physical laws which are extraneous? Plainly because their violation carries its own curse along with it, and no other enforcement is desirable. It is so, essentially, with moral laws, and this fact, firmly believed and kept prominent in the thoughts, would be of the most incalculable value.

CHAPTER XXIII.

FORFEITURE OF RIGHTS.

AGAINST the validity of much that I have argued heretofore, is urged the strange idea which is embraced in the heading of this chapter. It is granted by our author that, towards "new-created minds," the moral law of rectitude in the Divine Being would claim all which I have contended for,—namely, a just and kind regard to the best interests of all His creatures. But when he speaks of "this world as a system of sovereignty established over beings who have lost their original claims on the justice of God," (p. 474) and, in many other places, of a "forfeiture of rights" on the part of the creature, I am tempted to institute such an examination as will more fully ascertain whether there is really anything of this kind which can serve to weaken or affect any of the positions which I have chosen. The principle involved has been somewhat freely discussed in a previous chapter, (chap. XI.) but, from its fundamental relations in his theory, I would question it still further. What, then, does

this forfeiture of rights, so essential to his own, as well as to the prevailing orthodoxy, really amount to? If I understand it, there is no article of belief more fundamental than this. The whole system of the Divine government, subsequent to the fall, takes its tone from it.

What, then, let us inquire, is really meant by it? If it is only intended to assert that God adapts His treatment to the circumstances and wants of His creatures, varying it so that it shall be suited to their deserts always, it is no more than will be very readily admitted on all hands. No one will object to this, because it is so evidently in accordance with our own moral judgments. But it is equally plain that this is not what is intended by the asserted forfeiture of our rights. It cannot be denied that it is used to signify a radical change in the *principles* of the Divine conduct. Sin, on the part of the creature, is supposed to justify such a change. Prior to all sin on our part, or rather prior to our being involved in it, personally or otherwise, it is assumed, if I apprehend the matter aright, that God was bound to treat his children, whom He had created, as a kind and benevolent Father would. He was under obligation, no less by the act of giving them existence than by His own moral perfections, to deal by them justly, honorably, and even kindly; to cherish a benevolent regard for their welfare, and to seek their

good in all things. No position is maintained with more irresistible evidence, in our author's work, than this is.

But when the creature had fallen from his original condition of innocence; when he had once become involved in guilt, these claims on the Creator, for just and proper treatment, were utterly destroyed.

The principles of the Divine government become changed. God might then treat them unjustly, and unkindly, with the most perfect propriety, or exercise His sovereignty over them in any arbitrary or oppressive manner which can be conceived of! I repeat, what I have before suggested, that it means all this, or it means nothing. The statement of Dr. Beecher, that they had lost their original claims on the *justice* of God, seems to favor this conclusion. Is it possible that any sane mind can deliberately choose such a position as this? Can it not be said that even justice is due to the sinner? If he has no right to claim this, then, of course, it follows, that he may be treated unjustly with impunity! Again, and again, I have asked myself: how can it be possible that so very unreasonable and horrible a view can be taken of this subject? Can the slightest analogy be found to it, even in any human operations which have the sanction of good minds? Does a good parent change the principles on which he

conducts towards his child, simply because his child disobeys him? Does he treat him justly and kindly, so long as he is obedient, and then wrong and abuse him, and violate all the principles of rectitude towards him as soon as the child becomes disobedient? Or, if any earthly parent, from malice, or revenge, should do this, what christian mind or heart could he find that would justify him? Would he not be assailed by one general voice of disapprobation in this case? True, the good parent finds it necessary to vary his *mode* of conduct towards an offending child. He sees a demand for subjecting the child to discipline, to punishment, and perhaps to very severe chastisement; but whether it be severe or otherwise, if he is deserving of the name he bears, or wishes the approbation of good minds, though he may vary the mode, yet he will retain the *spirit* of his former treatment of his child. He will not alter the great *principles* of his conduct towards him. If he had been just before, he will be so still, though the principle may take a new manifestation. It was exhibited previously in rewards and direct acts of kindness. Now it takes the form of chastisement or retribution. Still it is the same principle of justice after all. And so too of other attributes. If he was benevolent to the child before it sinned, he would be equally benevolent afterwards, though this sentiment would find a

different mode of expression then; one which was adapted to the child's altered state. It might have displayed itself in caresses and endearments before; but it would join now with justice, and go with it, hand in hand, in the infliction of a salutary punishment. If this matter was submitted to the great body of good people everywhere, it is doubtful whether there would be a dissenting voice among them in regard to it. They would, doubtless, all say at once that this was the only correct course for a good parent to pursue. It meets with the sanction of the readiest and most reliable of our moral intuitions. And must we not, therefore, safely and properly apply it to the Divine government? If God is an infinitely wise and good parent, and His children, as our author maintains, had claims on Him for the proper exercise of His moral perfections, when first created, how could those claims ever be destroyed? If they prove faithless, will God do so too? If they become sinful, will He become unjust? Will He change as they change, and copy them in their wrongs? If not,—and what devout mind is not shocked at the supposition?—then the claims which His children had in the beginning, must forever remain the same. He will find it necessary to change His mode of treating them, but His spirit of love, and justice, and rectitude, must continue unaltered. If His moral perfections pre-

viously found expression in ways suited to their condition, so, in case of their failure in duty, these will be manifested through other channels and in forms adapted to their wants. But they will be still the same moral perfections. The sinner cannot claim the same treatment that he could while innocent, but he can claim that the exercise of the same Divine principles of honor and right shall be continued ; that is, unless it is *wrong* to claim what is *right*, which is an absurdity.

There is something extremely offensive, to my mind, in the very form of that expression,—“forfeiture of *rights*.” It can only be possible, in a certain qualified sense. A sinner may have forfeited his right to be regarded as innocent, or deserving of praise, but he can never forfeit his right to *just* treatment. He can never forfeit his right even to *kind* treatment on the part of the Creator, unless it can be shown that one wrong justifies another. In fact, this whole orthodox doctrine of a forfeiture, as it is held practically, is based upon this false idea. It is a notion which has grown out of the imperfections of men. In their want of uniform adherence to the principles of a kind and benevolent regard towards offenders, and in the false and pernicious notion, excited by their own revengeful feelings, that the wrongdoer is thrown without the pale of immediate and direct sympathy, and ought to be ; they find a

partial sanction of the dreadful idea that the sinner has lost "his original claims on the justice of God," in consequence of his transgression. As though wrong in the creature justified wrong in the Creator! As though God would attempt to overcome evil with evil! or to cast out Satan by Beelzebub! Yet He teaches us not to attempt any such thing. He tells us that we must overcome evil with good; that is, plainly, in the spirit of love; to bless those who curse us, and do good to those who hate us; that we may be children,—imitators,—of our Heavenly Father! He even tells us that if we love only those who love us, we are no better than the publican, and are undeserving of reward.

But does He not do more than this Himself? Does He not love the sinner? Dr. Beecher tells us that God will never violate His own laws. Must He not, therefore, meet evil, and resist it, in the same *spirit* which He has so imperatively urged upon us?

Furthermore: our author not only asserts, as I have stated, that the sinner forfeits all claims to the Divine *justice* even, but he also maintains that God must be so perceived by our minds as, not only to free Him from all suspicion of having caused the fall of His creatures, but as engaged in benevolent efforts for their recovery after they have become ruined through their own agency.

But how can these statements be reconciled? Do the moral sentiments of our minds require that He shall still be interested for the sinner after his fall? If so, do they not ask more of Him than they ought? Is not this plainly arraying our judgment of rectitude against His, when, at the same time, it is admitted that these moral principles are the same in God and man?

Has not our author claimed that these principles are wholly reliable, as existing in our minds,—that we have no other way of conceiving of them, indeed, and that we must assume that God is guided by them just as they exist in our highest and best conceptions? How, then, can our minds claim, as necessary to His perfections, a course of action towards the sinner,—an interest in the sinner's welfare, and active benevolent efforts for his recovery, when, at the same time, it is allowed that the sinner has really lost all claims on His justice, and He regards it as right to treat him accordingly? Is there not a direct inconsistency involved here?

Furthermore: Dr. Beecher maintains that the creature is now under what he terms an administration of Divine *sovereignty*, as distinguished from the administration of those moral principles under which men originally existed. I say, as *distinguished* from this, for, otherwise, there would seem to be no propriety in this designation of it.

But does he not assert that there is no defence of the acts of God that can be made on the mere ground of His sovereignty? "It is not enough to resort to the idea of sovereignty," he says, (p. 347,) "God, as a sovereign, has no authority to disregard the original rights of His creatures."

But if mere sovereignty does not authorize Him in doing this at one time, will it at any other time? If it will not justify His disregard of the principles of right, before men sin, then will it do so afterwards?

This involves the principle already considered, that wrong in the creature calls for wrong in the Creator!—and that God will resist evil by the spirit and power of evil. The whole matter is narrowed down to this point, namely: God does right as long as men do right. While they are true to the claims of moral principles, he will be. And when they are false to them he will become so too!

This result, as I have already stated, is most shocking to any good mind that fully receives it, and would render our conceptions of the character of God as dark and dreadful as those which we cherish of the character of the worst sinner. And I see no way of avoiding it, but in the adoption of my position.

God will be true and faithful to the moral principles of his nature, whether his creatures are so

or otherwise. He never changes. His perfections forbid it. Men may do wrong, but he never will. He will always be moved by the same great principles in all his actions towards them. If they do right he will reward them. This is honorable, just, and good. If they do wrong he will punish them. This is equally honorable, just, and good. He will also be actuated by a benevolent interest in the work of their recovery when they have fallen. The mission of Christ, and all the manifestations of Divine grace, show this fact fully. Never will he make their wrongs to him the excuse for wronging them. He will always assert the goodness of his disposition, and command, ultimately, the homage of his children by the exhibition of his glorious perfections. He will win their love and homage by showing them that he deserves it, no less than by the fact that their own moral interests demand it. This is the only view which we can take of the matter that will correspond to the demands of our own moral feelings. Our best conceptions of the Divine character will be satisfied with nothing short of this.

And, O! what a mournful thought it is, that the standard or *rule* of his life should be degraded below that of our own.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE WORLD A HOSPITAL.

THE relations of the present world to our author's system, are peculiar, and of the highest importance. It is not merely a hospital for the unnumbered millions of fallen spirits, who rebelled in a previous state of existence, and to whom God has graciously allotted another probation and chance for redemption, but a theatre for the exhibition of his wisdom and power in the forming of a church through which the reign of Satan is to be finally broken, and by which future sinning is to be avoided, and myriads trained for holiness and heaven. Visionary, in part, as I must deem them, yet there is a depth and a grandeur in his views, here, which ought not to be overlooked. They indicate the same high purpose, which shows itself in almost every chapter, to vindicate, if possible, the Divine character; to seize upon every available circumstance which shall tend to display the Divine beneficence and care, as though this

could, in some way, alleviate the dreadful horrors of the thought that there were, after all, millions on millions of human souls, who were doomed to utter and hopeless anguish.

Let us, however, for the present, consider the world, as he regards it, as a great moral hospital for the recovery of fallen spirits. Does it correspond at all to our best views of what such an institution should be? I am well aware that, knowing as little as we do of all the relations of details in the broad sweep of God's economy, it would hardly become us to sit in judgment on the ways and means which he adopts in his infinite wisdom, when once it is fairly and fully settled that he has really adopted them. Thus, if it were clearly and authoritatively revealed to us, that this world *was* an asylum for spiritual patients, where the morally diseased of a previous state were gathered for medical treatment, I should not dare to question the wisdom and goodness which presided over its arrangements. However these might appear to my own judgment, it would be enough for me to know that God had actually established them.

But where this is left an open question, and especially as in the case before us, where these arrangements, and the general character of the institution, are among the principal evidences from which we are to decide whether He has really constructed it for such a purpose, the case becomes

a very different one. We are bound, then, to examine them thoroughly, and what would have been daring presumption before, is rendered in this case an imperative duty.

Now, there is no Divine authority for asserting that this world is what our author claims it to be, and we must either take his word for it, which I am sure he would not ask of us, or we must look into the matter well, and see whether the facts and phenomena presented will really lead us to such a conviction.

How is it, so far as we can see, in regard to the case before us? Does the appearance of this world, and of human life in it, answer at all to our conceptions of what a moral hospital should be? The proper answer to this question must, of course, be somewhat modified by the decision of a previous one—viz.: What properly belongs to beings such as this theory represents men to have been just prior to entering on this world, and what rule of action was right and proper for the Divine Being in regard to them?

If all which our author assumes here is granted, —if we admit that mankind in a previous existence had forfeited all claims on the Divine justice as well as mercy, that they were all richly deserving of eternal damnation, and that, under these circumstances, God might exercise His sovereignty towards them in any arbitrary manner

conceivable, with perfect propriety, then all opportunity for investigating the *right* of anything which occurs here in accordance with His arrangements is foreclosed at once, and we should have no possible rule by which to guide us in the examination. A most mournful predicament, truly! If we find what appear to be the greatest wrongs in the allotments of Providence here—if the grossest injustice was plainly manifest in the assignment of our condition or circumstances, or in the treatment to which we are subjected, and if a doubt is raised, or a question asked, touching the harmony of such things with the Divine perfections, are our mouths to be closed with the cool reply that this is a system of Divine sovereignty, and not a rule of moral attributes? We are told that this is a moral hospital which we live in, and when the only possible way in which we can judge of the truth of the assertion, namely, by applying to it the rules of moral right and propriety, is attempted, we are virtually put aside by the declaration that no such thing as moral right or justice can be expected here—we ought not to ask or hope for it—we have richly deserved hell long ago, and it is only of God's grace that we are existing here at all! Any wrongs, therefore, to which we may be subjected, are to be submitted to patiently; and, indeed, we ought even to be thankful that we are merely imprisoned when we should justly have been hung!

Again, I protest against any such mode of argumentation. I protest against any assumption of this sort, that God can ever govern men merely by the exercise of an arbitrary and sovereign power without the guidance and influence of His moral perfections. I protest against anything and everything which wears this complexion in the slightest degree. It is the highest possible impeachment of His character. It is the foulest reproach that can be cast upon Him. For when it is once admitted that He can, for a moment even, absolve Himself from all allegiance to His moral attributes, that He can, as it were, lay their control aside, and exercise merely arbitrary power alone, He becomes invested with the worst features of a tyrant, and would excite the deepest indignation, if not intense hatred, of every *good* spirit in heaven and earth.

Certainly no view can be so terribly painful to a soul that is loyal to the highest rectitude. I confess to a most distressing uncertainty in regard to our author's meaning here. When he speaks of this world as a mere dispensation of sovereignty—when he represents the claims of moral right and honor on the Divine Being as restricted to particular times and seasons—when he sets forth one class of *principles* as guiding the Divine administration towards new-created minds, and at least by implication, an entirely different class as

dealing with men in the character of sinners, and, more especially, when I read his own language that men by sin have forfeited all claims on even the *justice* of God—I am driven by a logical necessity into all the revolting consequences to which I have alluded. These shocking results rise up and stare me in the face at once. I see no way to avoid them, having taken up his positions and carried them out legitimately.

And then, too, I have thought that this *could not* have been his meaning. I must have misapprehended him entirely. *How*, I do not know; but I must, in some way, have misinterpreted his views here. I find this suspicion strengthened by many declarations in his volume, that seem to me utterly inconsistent with anything like what I have been supposing. Thus, I find, (p. 16, *et seq.*) not only the statement that moral renovation is the great practical work and end of christianity, and that in this system Christ came to call sinners to repentance, but he also explicitly declares that one of the moving forces of this system consists in “a full developement of the *honor, justice, and benevolence of God*, in *ALL His dealings with man*, so made as, in the first place, to free Him from the charge of dishonorably ruining them, and then *to exhibit Him as earnestly and benevolently engaged in efforts for their salvation, through Christ*, AFTER THEY HAVE BEEN RUINED

BY THEIR OWN FAULT.” A clear exhibition of this fact he regards as necessary, and demanded by the highest and best of our moral intuitions, in order to avoid any imputation of dishonor to the Divine character.

Surely, this would seem to be plain enough and true enough, and if any reliance is to be placed upon it, then *God is just as fully under the guidance of moral principles*, in the system of this world, as at any previous time—as fully bound by the laws of honor and rectitude towards the sinner now as He was before the first transgression. This is the only position which can be safely taken, and the only one, in fact, which will not lead us directly to the unspeakably dreadful inconsistencies already noticed.

It follows, then, as a fair logical inference, that we are justified in applying to God's dealings with men, now, the same moral principles, or the same great *rule*, which we have been using all along hitherto. Notwithstanding all that our author claims, which appears inconsistent with it, I shall assume from his own statements, as quoted, that God is infinitely honorable, just, wise, and even benevolent, in all his dealings with men in this world, as he has ever been hitherto, and ever will continue to be.

Taking our position here, and looking at the present life from this stand-point, what appear-

ances are there which favor the hypothesis that it is a moral hospital?

Regarded in this light, one cannot but be struck, at the first glance, with the apparent want of wisdom in adapting this world to such a purpose. Many parts of it seem as illy arranged for the realization of such an end, as any which we could well conceive of.

If it is merely a primary school, for the training of the infancy of human beings, and out of which they are to pass to a higher institution; if its principal purpose is to answer to the wants of the first stages of *education*, then the same features would wear a very different complexion, and those very facts and circumstances would fall into the relations of harmony and order, which, in the former case, would seem ill-conditioned, and badly arranged.

Thus, viewed as a new probation for fallen human spirits, there is an inequality in the allotment of their condition here, which can hardly be accounted for, no less than what appears to be the very questionable policy of putting them here at all. If the first state of probation was purely a spiritual one, why should not this succeeding one have been such also?

Without adopting, to any extent, or even appearing to sanction, the essential idea of Gnosticism, I cannot but be impressed with the fact that

many of the *temptations* to sin spring from our material bodies, or from our mysterious connexion with them. Our entire animal nature, as we term it, with all its host of wants, passions, appetites, propensities, and lusts, which Paul, as well as our own experience, tell us, "war against the soul," of what possible use are these, according to our author's system, except to vitally injure us, and render far less hopeful the prospect of our recovery? Could not a spiritual sphere have been assigned us, where we should, at least, have been free from all the inducements to sin which assail us from this source?

Is it not, in this respect, very much as if a man seized with fever should be taken to a pest-house, filled with small-pox patients, to effect his cure? Were there any conceivable circumstances which rendered our abode in a material world, and with mortal bodies such as I have mentioned, absolutely necessary? Could not a sphere have been chosen, where our temptations would have been less, instead of greater, and our hazard of infinite peril rather diminished than increased? In such a state, which it would seem was, at least, possible, might not a church have been planted; a scheme of redemption instituted, and all the essential benefits of the present system have been preserved without its additional and dreadful liabilities to sin and death?

It is not a sufficient reply to this, to say that God has ordained the present plan for this purpose, and, therefore, it must have been the best plan of any which was possible. This is a begging of the question. The point in discussion is, has God really established this world for such a purpose? And I claim that whoever attempts to prove it, will encounter this difficulty at the very threshold.

There is, growing out of the facts which I have hinted at, a previous improbability to be met and overcome before other considerations or direct evidences should be allowed to weigh in its favor. Why should we have a worse condition, for our second trial, instead of a better one, if the Deity was really moved by a sincere spirit of benevolence towards us in instituting it? I repeat, that it is no suitable reply to say we deserved nothing better. The question is not one concerning our merits or ill-deserts, but simply this: What would *God* properly do, if acting towards us kindly and benevolently?

If he is earnestly engaged in efforts for our salvation from previous sin, is this such treatment as he would be likely to resort to for such a purpose? It must be very evident to any good mind, that the putting of us into connexion with our earthly bodies, and the subjection of us to all its increased inducements to sin, could not, in this

case, have been the result of either wisdom or goodness, unless there were circumstances which rendered it absolutely unavoidable. And as none such are apparent, I must presume that this previous improbability lies full in the way of admitting the hypothesis under consideration.

Furthermore, we must consider, also, the condition and circumstances of men, here, in regard to other particulars that bear upon this question. Take the social and organic relations of men,—are they such as a morally diseased spirit should be thrust into if the object was really to cure him? Did not our author see that the whole force of the entire ninth chapter of his book, would bear directly against his own views in regard to this particular?

I do not adopt every expression in it, without modification; but as he does, and as it is, in the main, so correct a statement of facts, I would respectfully call it to his notice as inconsistent with his theory of this world as a moral hospital. He says, “if a new-created being has a sinful or morally deteriorated nature, there would seem to be, on these principles, the greater reason for not exposing him to the additional influence of circumstances tending to develop, strengthen, and mature, his sinful propensities.” And, yet, he allows that “man is subjected from his birth to the power of other sinful minds, united in de-

praved social arrangements and organizations, called, collectively, the world. In the heathen world, and in sinful families of christian nations," he tells us, that "this subjugation to the power of evil social organizations begins from the time of birth. All the pollutions of idolatry, all the evil passions, actions, and examples of sinful parents, surround the child from his birth upward, and form the moral atmosphere in which he lives."

He quotes, with approbation, from Dr. Burnap, the statement, that "society, from the same causes, is as capable of becoming vitiated as the individual, with this more calamitous consequence, that it reacts upon the individual, to make him more depraved than he could have become had he stood alone."

"Under an arbitrary or a tyrannical government, all motives to a virtuous life are greatly weakened. * * * Take, as an example, the Ottoman empire. The very manner in which the government is administered corrupts and ruins everything. The whole organization of the state is nothing more nor less than a vast machine for extortion and robbery. * * * The very *appearance* of thrift and wealth is dangerous, and all motive to industry and economy, to good morals and good management, is taken away. Those who are plundered seek first a refuge in hypocrisy and deception; or, having lost all, become the robbers

and oppressors of those who are more defenceless than themselves. Can it be said that a human being, who is born and passes through life under such a government and in such a state of society, has a fair opportunity for right development? No more than a grain of corn thrown into a heap of stones or a thicket of brambles."

"The power of corrupt social organizations," Dr. Beecher adds, "is not at all exaggerated in this statement; and the same remarks may be extended to corrupt religious, educational, and commercial organizations, which have in all ages exerted inconceivable power. So, too, as far as the larger social circles, of which he is a part, in christian nations, are worldly, ambitious, luxurious or sensual, he is led, by social power and rewards, and by the fear of shame, to follow the same course to which his depraved heart already impels him. Hence the fact that large cities are slaughter-houses of countless throngs of young men,—in theatres, at the gaming-table, the tavern, or the place of impure resort. * * In some communities, the tendencies are all to ruin. * * They have tended to develop, mature, and confirm the native depravity which already exists in each man as an individual; and this alike in the higher circles of the wealthy, fashionable, and powerful, and in the middle and lower walks of life."

Now, here is the plain statement, first, that no

mind already depraved, or having a sinful nature to begin with, should, properly, be exposed to such fatal influences; and then this dark and gloomy description of human society is set forth as the actual state into which men are plunged by natural birth! I would ask, in the first place, whether, supposing that this is an unsuitable condition for those who enter upon it with a native depravity obtained in any way that it is generally supposed to be obtained; is it not equally unsuitable for those who have the same amount of depravity accumulated, as our author believes it to have been, in a previous state of existence? In the second place, if these accounts of the trials of the present life are correct, as he claims them to be, and as I have admitted that they are, in the main; then is it really a proper state or condition in which to place the morally diseased, when the very object had in view is their recovery? How could a worse state of things be conceived of for this purpose?

I do not know how free from seductive influences an ordinary spiritual state may be, and how much preferable we could consider it to the present state, so far as temptation to evil is concerned, but it can hardly be supposed that it would be as bad as this world in its trials of human virtue and the obstacles which it would throw in the way of the recovery of fallen spirits.

Indeed, with the fixed and active sinful *habits* which our author supposes all men to bring with them when they enter this life, it must be a matter of astonishment almost that any of them ever return to holiness. If they do, must it not rather be from a fortunate birth in the household of pious parents, or from an arrangement of circumstances more favorable than usual, than from any superior efforts or merits on their part? And would it not be madness to hope for it, where this condition was the most unfavorable of any? What would be thought of a parent, in a retired part of the country, where it would seem that every circumstance almost was combined favorably to the preservation of virtue, who should take a son that had fallen into vice, and in order to give him one more chance for restoration and obedience, send him into one of the foulest sinks of moral pollution to be found in any of our large cities? It would be difficult for one of good habits and fixed principles to withstand the various allurements to sin which cluster about such a spot, and why should one be sent there by a parent who sincerely wished to cure him of evil tendencies already powerful? Would such a parent, in ordinary human estimation, be held as a wise and prudent man? Could he more surely seal the doom of his child in any other conceivable manner? And, yet, how very much better than this has been the

treatment of fallen spirits, taken from a sphere in which no animal or worldly temptations certainly could assail them, and placed in such a condition as our author has described? Are not the moral "slaughter-houses" of which he speaks, as infesting our larger towns, rather undesirable things in a moral hospital? Can the chances for a cure there be very great? And, still we know that God sends thousands by birth and inevitable necessity into just such places, and virtually condemns them to spend their probation there! And this is their last chance for recovery; the last possible opportunity to escape eternal damnation!

But the worst facts of the case remain to be told. Our author, if I understand him, sanctions the idea, that multitudes of devils are actually swarming along our earthly course, watching every favorable opportunity to seduce and betray us; and all this diabolical influence is hovering about us unseen and unrecognized, on our part, except dimly, perhaps, through a diseased spiritual vision! Let me give his own language here. It is "clearly revealed," he tells us, "in the word of God," that this world "is the abode and theatre of action for hosts of fallen spirits, who, whilst the generations of men die, live and plan, and acquire malignant wisdom, from age to age. They understand the depravity of man and his moral weakness; and long experience has given them terrific skill in the

science of temptation. Such systems of error as the depraved hearts of men are ready to adopt, they skillfully invent, promulgate, and defend. Such organizations as are in spirit most opposed to the kingdom of God, they form, animate, and sustain. Thus, not only by individual and transient suggestions, but through organized, established, and permanent systems of evil, do they "work in the children of disobedience" and "lead them captive at their will." "The fearful power," he adds, "exerted by these dark rulers of this world, we are in no danger of over-estimating." (pp. 76, 77.) But, enough; I am sick of this disgusting picture. There are no words which are capable of expressing the horror with which I regard it, or the deep and mournful indignation which I should feel towards a being whom I could believe would subject his children to such fearful trials when their immortal interests hung upon the issue! No reverence or piety in my own soul could suppress, in this case, the conviction that it was far more dishonorable than any crime ever committed by mortal man. And yet we are told that this world is a moral hospital, built expressly for the recovery of fallen spirits! Is all this diabolical scheming for our ruin, beyond the reach of the Divine power? Has God no possible way by which He could shut us out from it? Or does He not wish to do it? If I understand Dr.

Beecher, the Divine Being will ultimately, by the exercise of His sovereign power, destroy this arch-enemy and his hosts. Why could it not have been done in season to save some millions of His ruined children? Why lock the door after one's house is rifled and his goods stolen? Would not common worldly prudence do it beforehand, especially if fore-warned of the evil?

But there is still another difficulty in the way of this theory of a world-hospital which ought not to be left out of the account. I refer to those who are idiots or insane from childhood, and also to those who die in infancy. I have seen careful estimates of the number of these, but will not attempt to state it accurately. It is well known that they comprise a very large class, at least one-third of the human race. And if we regard the world in the light of the theory before us, what is to finally become of all this countless host? Have all its members passed on to their doom of infinite anguish, after this terrible mimicry of a second probation? Of what possible advantage has this hospital been to them? Has it, in any proper sense, given them another chance for recovery? Is mere sovereignty to interpose in their case, and do for them what might never have been done had they possessed sense and reason and a longer life here? If so, what an infinite pity it is that we could not all have been served in the same man-

ner! And if it be not so, I ask the purpose of their visit to this world? Why carry the dead to a hospital, or even those who it is known cannot live but a few moments? Is there not something inexplicable in regard to this matter, according to our author's hypothesis?

True, it may be said in reply, that the subject involves difficulties any way. The case of this class furnishes, it may be thought, a dark problem in view of any theory—one that, perhaps, we cannot fully solve. Most certainly it does, in view of any theory which suspends the immortal destiny of souls on the occurrences of this life. It is not a difficulty which presses upon our author's theory alone. It has an almost equal force against any form of orthodoxy. And I see not how either he or his brethren can explain it consistently with their views of life as a probation for eternity. The idea of *such* a probation as either believes in, for these individuals, is a mere mockery. And, although I admit frankly, that with my own view of the character and purpose of life, I can see little that is gained in their case, except a fulfillment of the appointed mode for commencing existence, yet the difficulties attending the question in this view, are nothing in comparison to those which attend it when regarded through any professedly evangelical system. If life here is a primary school, as well as a suitable mode of com-

mencing existence, then the only difficulty to be solved in their case is to see why God should so order it that some should spend so many years in training and discipline here, while they are removed without any. But, inasmuch as, according to my views, no infinite interests are involved in it, it is of very little comparative importance. All commence existence here in this case alike; and, if some are taken immediately away, it is doubtless to another school, where their development may go on equally well, and thus all may be trained, ultimately, for that high destiny for which God designed them in the beginning. At least, I see no other method of harmonizing the facts of the case with the acknowledged perfections of God.

It will be seen that Dr. Beecher's view disposes entirely of that troublesome question of infant damnation; that is, it does not allow the monstrous result which no other orthodox system can *consistently* escape,—viz.: that some are consigned to hell, who have never possessed thought, or reason, or will, of their own, but purely for the sins of others.

This most monstrous of all conceptions, he does not allow the possibility of realizing, for although some dire disease may take the little one from its mother's breast, and consign it to eternal perdition, it is but an old offender, after all, and richly de-

serving of the doom, for the sins of a previous life ! That his brethren cannot dispose of the case as easily, will be seen when we come to consider the doctrine of human depravity.

Many other thoughts rush to my mind, in regarding this world as a moral hospital, which seem to bear with great force against such an idea. What possible chance for spiritual recovery has a Flat-head or Snake Indian, or one of the Root-diggers of the Rocky Mountains ? Or how is it to be supposed that a wild Hottentot, and still wilder Bushman, herding like animals in caves and jungles, can have a fair probation for eternity ? We might about as well suppose that the idiot's fate depended on its knowledge of algebra, as that the immortal interests of these destitute and miserable wretches were dependent upon their attainment of a certain spiritual condition here.

Nothing connected with this view presses with greater severity upon our sense of rectitude, perhaps, than this immense inequality in the earthly lot of men, when an equal hazard rests upon all. Why should our author have been the son of a pious father and devout minister, ensuring an education that would almost infallibly lead him through the church into the gates of eternal life ? Has there been, considering the circumstances attending his course, anything more than a bare possibility of his failure, and this against the most

powerful of all ordinary influences combined? And as he sits in his quiet study, with thoughts intent on heaven and spiritual things, and ponders the arrangements, so purely providential, which have ensured him that condition, and rendered his salvation next to certain, let him think of the millions who are born in vice, cradled in wickedness, bred in infamy, and doomed by circumstances, equally providential, to a life of ignorance and sin, and then let him say, if he can, either, that this is a fit and proper hospital for them, or an equally fair probation for him and them together.

Will not a thought of this tremendous disparity intrude itself at times, and clamor for an explanation? And will not all the purest joys, which are opened to him in his own happy lot, be poisoned by reflections upon their far less fortunate—their sad and hopeless condition?

CHAPTER XXV.

OBJECT OF THE PRESENT LIFE.

Nothing is more strikingly apparent, when we approach any of the great institutions or plans of the Supreme wisdom, than our inability to fathom all the nicer details of its arrangements. Its general outline, and more prominent features, we can readily grasp, perhaps. And the great principles on which it is based, and the more important laws which guide its operations, may all be sufficiently apparent to an observing mind, when the attempt to analyze the more minute processes which characterize it, and trace out their intricate bearings and relations, would but end in entire confusion of thought.

This is especially true, in regard to any effort, of which I am capable, to grasp the economy of human life here. It has peculiarities which I cannot understand, facts and phenomena of which I know not the *rationale*, and problems which I cannot solve, except by referring them all to certain great principles or laws, of whose existence I

feel sure, but whose operations, in certain particulars, are too subtle to be easily traced. However, notwithstanding all considerations of this kind, the *general character* and *purpose* of our existence in this world, are, as I think, sufficiently evident. That they are *educational*, I fully believe. Human existence commences here, and its commencement is, all things considered, its lowest point. It begins at the foot of the ladder, not at the top, and every step of its subsequent course, is, really, one higher, though at the time it may appear otherwise. The passing carriage-wheel may seem to a spectator as turning, one half of it, backwards, when actually every segment is moving forward continually. So it is with the life of the individual; so it is with the life of the race. And not only is its course onward, but upward, also. As Mrs. Child beautifully expresses it, somewhere—"the general course of the world is spiral,—every revolution is a step higher." I would say that our present being is probationary, did I not fear that the popular perversions of this term might make it convey a wrong idea. Probation implies, strictly, the process of proving a thing. The man in the parable, who had bought the five yoke of oxen, said, that he was going to prove them,—that is, test them practically, by putting them to work. He was about to display their abilities, and exhibit what they could do. So, if I should say

that the present life of man was one of probation, I should intend by it, simply, that God, having given to us certain powers and faculties, physical, intellectual, and moral or spiritual, has placed us here for trial,—to prove them. He has given us the world as a proper field for their primary operations, and the main object is, growth, development, education, and progress. In this sense the term is what I want, and I would say that life is a *probation*. Our author's view of probation I cannot accept. It agrees with that usually held by his brethren, in this respect, namely : in supposing that it is a condition in which men are acting in reference to a future state of rewards and punishments. He does not allow that they are tried, judged, and treated precisely according to their deserts now ; but supposes that judgment is postponed to a period subsequent to the death of the body, where it will be administered fully, terminating in the assignment of all to their final doom of weal or woe.

In rejecting this position, I would, by no means, be understood as affirming an entire and abrupt moral separation between this and the future life. The same moral beings that exist here, must exist there. All which is essential to their existence and identity must remain with them. The results of their discipline and training here must be carried along with them there. That essentially the

same character which one has on leaving this world will be found with him on his entrance into the next, much the same as the child carries to the commencement of the higher school the exact amount of attainments with which he left the primary department, I cannot doubt. That in any changes which it may undergo afterwards, the same laws will be observed which rule its formation here, I must believe. I do not think that any actual sin can extend beyond the time when the resurrection or raised state, is fully attained, for Christ tells us that there men are to be equal unto the angels. But the resurrection itself I regard as a great *process* which will raise men morally to this high condition referred to by our Saviour.

I have no good reason to think that the laws of education, which govern here, will be given up, or essentially altered, so long as spiritual culture or improvement is desirable. And I offer these suggestions, that my main views may not be misapprehended, when objecting to the views of our author. The theory which regards the present life as one in which men are placed to act chiefly with reference to an arbitrary judgment and the awards of a future state, and that the work of judging, and rewarding, and punishing, is postponed to an after-death period, is, to my mind, utterly inconsistent with facts, as well as with reason, and the general tenor of revelation. It

leaves all the inequalities of the present state,—I mean those which are providential, and which I have already hinted at,—inequalities in the duration of life, and its surrounding moral influences,—entirely without solution.

Nearly *one-third* of the human race, it is supposed, die in infancy, or before the proper period of responsibility commences. No such view of probation as I am examining can exist for these. Then there are all the benighted millions of heathen lands,—whose moral and spiritual advantages are no more to be compared with ours than the mind of the idiot is to the mind of Newton,—which must also be taken into the account.

And then, too, what a wide diversity exists in the lot of different individuals even in the same age and nation! Contrast the condition of the child of a pirate with that of the child of a christian clergyman. The former, born upon the billows of that ocean which has swallowed up the forms of those his own father has coldly murdered, is shut out, by an inexorable necessity, from all good influences, and subjected, from his very childhood, to all bad ones that can be supposed to congregate in a pirate ship. Let his mother die while he is young, or be as vile herself as one in that condition would probably become. The child's eyes first open upon deeds of deepest guilt. Scenes of carnage, riot, debauchery, and blood, are ever

before him. No better spirit breathes upon him. He knows nothing of the name of God, or of Christ, except as he hears them uttered in the oath, the curse, or the bitter malediction. His ears are evermore assailed with the foulest words of sin. No voice of prayer is ever heard by him. No pious exhortation ever falls upon his ear. Without God's power, arbitrarily exerted,—and this, the laws of such a probation as we are considering, would render improper, for if exercised in one case, why not in all?—how could it be possible that this child should not be trained for inevitable ruin? Will not his heart be very certain to become hard and cold as those of his only associates, and his hand finally as bloody and cruel as theirs? Now let that child have been born in the family of a pious clergyman. Let him have heard the songs of love and devotion hymned by a pious mother's lips over his very cradle. Let the very air which he breathed have been perfumed with the odor of all saintly virtues, and with kind hands to fold him in the morning and evening prayer, and reverent spirits to lift him trustingly and adoringly to God, and affectionate and persuasive hearts to lead him to Christ,—what could rationally be expected, in this case, but a safe and sure passage to immortal blessedness? I am not assuming here an absolute *causative* power in outward circumstances, such as does not exist, or such as

would be inconsistent with all ideas of responsibility ; but only that influence which we all know that they do exert in the formation of human character, according to our own experience and observation. I have known children attain to a very high moral condition whose surrounding circumstances seemed by no means favorable ; and I have also known the children of good christian parents, who were surrounded apparently with the best of moral influences, and who have, nevertheless, disappointed the hopes and prayers of friends, and become fearfully estranged from holiness and rectitude. I cannot, therefore, adopt the infidel hypothesis, that "circumstances make men." It is a superficial observation which leads to this result. And, still we all know how very much these providential arrangements have to do in the formation of human character ; and however strenuously it may be denied by those who have some favorite notion to be sustained by doing so, all, virtually and practically, confess it in their anxiety for the prevalence of good influences, and the attainment of a healthy outward condition for those they desire to save.

Now all these considerations are utterly inconsistent with the object of life, as our author regards it. They will not correspond to his idea of a probation, and cannot be explained in harmony with it. There are also various other objections,

which bear strongly against it, and which render it, in the highest degree, improbable, not to say absurd.

Thus, we know that there are, at least, *some* rewards and punishments administered in this life. This is allowed on all hands. Dr. Beecher does not deny it. He even gives a description of the arraignment, trial, and judgment or sentence passed upon Adam, immediately after the first transgression! Adam was not only tried and condemned, at once, on the commission of that sin, but began immediately to reap the retributive fruits of it; fruits which God told him should last during life,—until he returned to the ground,—but of the continuance of which, beyond that period, no remote intimation even was given him. A similar procedure was had, as the bible informs us, following hard upon the sad crime of Cain. That unnatural and inhuman act, which first stained the virgin earth with human gore, was, at once succeeded by the murderer's seizure, trial, and judgment, and his sentence of banishment, from the joys of God's spiritual presence, was immediately carried into execution.

The inhabitants of the old world, who were swept off by the deluge, as a punishment for their sins, and all the individual cases in which retribution was inflicted, as well as the many instances in which the Mosaic account indicates the bestow-

ment of favors for obedience, all assure us of the certainty of my position. I do not care, so far as my present argument is concerned, whether *all* good and evil existing here meets with its appropriate deserts: it is enough that *we know that much of it does*; and this, I say, no one can successfully deny. What, then, is the necessary logical inference? Are human actions rewarded and punished without any *trial* which shall determine their merits? Is it done as chance or whim may dictate? Or is it all done in rectitude, and in perfect conformity with the laws which God has ordained for our government? Does not reward and punishment, in the Divine government, pre-suppose of necessity a *trial* and a *judgment*? Or, are they administered on the principle that the school-teacher adopted, who made it a practice to whip his scholars all around, before leaving the room, as he said he knew that they would deserve it while he was away? Admitting, then, that the Divine government is administered in perfect rectitude, and that no punishment is inflicted without previous trial and a moral judgment or decision, the question arises,—Is this the case with only a portion of men, and a part of human actions? Are some men tried and condemned in this world, and others passed by entirely? Or, are some particular deeds judged here, and others put by for future adjudication? Is this a rational supposi-

tion? Is any intimation given of such a fact in the scriptures? Where, then, is the need, or propriety, of a general judgment in the future state, so far as the deeds of the present life are concerned? Are men to be judged in this world, and then re-judged hereafter? And where is this vulgar notion of a general judgment, *after death*, to be found in the scriptures? Was it revealed to Adam? Was it known to Cain, and the Antediluvians? From whence, pray, could they have obtained any knowledge of it? We have no remote hint that any revelation communicated it. Certainly there is no account of any, either in the Mosaic history or tradition. Did the ancient Jews—those who had the written law, with its carefully detailed penalties,—have any intimation that they were to be tried by a judgment hereafter? The eminent critic, Dr. Campbell, whose orthodoxy will hardly be doubted, maintains that the Jewish scriptures are silent in regard to the actual condition of men after death. The *sheol*, to which they often refer, was merely a hidden or unknown state, the receptacle of all souls, both of the good and of the bad, where, as Job says, the rich and poor meet together, and where the slave is free from his master. While I could find several expressions in the Old Testament, which seem to indicate that the writers believed *in no active existence* for man beyond the grave, it would be

very difficult to find a single one on which they could found a distinct view of any event which might occur subsequent to the death of the body. Life and immortality were *brought to light* through the gospel.

Here, then, were all the inhabitants of the old world, and the entire post-diluvian race, down to the time of Christ, with all who have since lived and died beyond the reach of the gospel, comprising almost the entire human family to the present hour, who have never known or heard a word of such a doctrine as that of a judgment after death, even if christianity were found to reveal it!

The Jewish scriptures speak often enough of God's government, and of his *judgment*, but they invariably describe him as ruling and judging men here in the present life. "Thou *renderest* unto every man according to his work,"—"God *judgeth* the righteous,"—"The Lord is known by the judgment which he *executeth*,"—"Verily, He is a God that *judgeth in the earth*,"—"He shall set *judgment in the earth*," &c.,—are common expressions of the Old Testament, and wholly consistent with all which we know of God's dealings with men, either in ancient or modern times. He rules and governs, judges, rewards, and punishes all men in this world, and these facts seem utterly incon-

sistent with the idea of a general judgment hereafter.

I believe, as I have before suggested, that men are probationers—that is, on *trial* now—not that they will be tried hereafter, nor that they are on trial now to decide on what condition shall be arbitrarily bestowed upon them hereafter—but, simply, because that, in the Divine order of things, this is necessary for their training, education, development, discipline, and ultimate perfection. It is a part of the process which their growth requires.

The spiritual judging of men, either by God or by Christ, together with the rewarding and the punishing of them, are all included *in the probation itself*—not made to follow it. They form *component elements* of this present state of trial. It may be illustrated as follows: We furnish our children with books, and all the necessary apparatus for pursuing their studies, and send them to school. There they are on probation, in the proper sense of the term. They are proving themselves, culturing their minds, exhibiting and developing their powers, and showing what they can do; not by any means with a view to their ultimate reward or punishment, years afterwards, perhaps, because reward and punishment make up a part of their discipline *at the time*—they are a part of the trial itself, and the great object of the

whole is their mental and moral growth and profit.

We do not make reward or punishment the *object* of school-training. We adopt them only as *means* in attaining that object, which, of itself, I should hope, was something better and higher than anything of this kind. So it is in the Divine government also. Its character, so far as we are concerned here, is *educational*. And there is something to my mind positively ridiculous in the orthodox notion that, to reward and punish men, constitute the highest, and indeed the only ultimate purpose of human life. As though existence was aimed at nothing nobler than this!

To suppose it, is taking just as low and degraded a view of the true *end* of being, as one would take of a child's school-training who should subject him to it for no other reason than that he might either get his "reward of merit," or a sound whipping! I can hardly express, in too strong terms, my utter abhorrence of such a notion, as wholly unworthy of the Divine character. To suppose that the highest object which God contemplated in creating and placing us here, was, simply, that he might have an opportunity of rewarding and punishing us hereafter; that there is something in this to make it desirable *as an end*, is, really, to subject his whole economy, so far as we are concerned, to merited reproach, if not utter contempt.

The truth is, He made us for growth, improvement, and ultimate perfection. And no moral judging, or rewarding, or punishing, of men, is of any possible importance, which are not *means* to this end, or aids to this great process. *As such* they are very necessary. As elements of a state of discipline; as agents both of comfort and correction, God finds them essential to the higher and nobler purposes of His government. They are embraced in, and properly belong to, our present state of probation.

In this view of the case, the facts of life, and the moral attributes and purposes of God, for the most part, appear harmonious. A thousand difficulties, which would otherwise present themselves, vanish almost, if not entirely, as soon as we come to regard the object of human life as being what I have stated it. If man is formed and placed here, as in a primary school, the object being his growth and improvement, not simply in regard to his religious affections, or moral feelings, or social attributes, or intellectual abilities, or physical powers, only, but in reference to all these harmoniously combined, then all the darker problems of the present life vanish, and innumerable clouds of doubt and difficulty fold themselves up and pass away.

That this is, essentially, the true view, I do not doubt. I cannot understand the human constitu-

tion, or its circumstances, or the dealings of God in regard to us, otherwise. It seems to me that every thing points to this as the object of life. And, so far as the main principle, which it involves, is concerned, it is not, by any means, singular, when compared to other portions of God's economy. In this respect, man is merely subjected to a great law which seems to run through all animate creation. Nothing in any of the departments of nature attains its full perfection by a single creative effort. The fable of Minerva springing full-formed from the brain of Jupiter, may answer to a heathenish imagination, but it does not correspond to our knowledge of facts as they exist around us. The great primary law for everything which has life, is growth. Its being is characterized by successive stages of development; "first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear." Maturity, or perfection, is attained only by progressive movements and operations.

Such is the great law of human existence. It points us to an ultimate that is far above the present. For all growth is upward, never is it downward. The tendency of things is ever to something better. The oak is better than the acorn. The fruit is better than the blossom. And man, beginning his course in all the weakness and dependence of infancy, must, according to the Divine purpose and laws, find his way ultimately

nearer and nearer to the sublime heights of God's perfections. Veering oft from his direct course, it may be, as the ship tacks and turns from baffling winds and counter currents, yet will he, by Divine guidance and aid, find the serene haven of peace and joy at last.

CHAPTER XXVI.

HUMAN DEPRAVITY, AS HELD BY DR. BEECHER,
IMPROBABLE.

IN considering the evidences which our author offers for the hypothesis of pre-existence, in an earlier part of this work, I waived the consideration of his main proof, namely: the argument founded on its alleged necessity, with the intimation that it would be referred to here. If the common orthodox view of human depravity, which I understand him fully to adopt, is true, and if God is, at the same time, to be exhibited as honorable and just, in his dealings towards us, then, something like his theory is absolutely necessary. These hostile positions, as they now stand, are positively irreconcilable. Pre-existence, says Dr. Beecher, harmonizes them. *Therefore*, we know that it is true, just as we know that the Newtonian philosophy is true, because it agrees with and reconciles all the facts to which it properly applies. Such is the character of his argument. How his brethren will deal with it, I do

not know. How they can do it, and still retain their present views, is, to me, inconceivable. I regard it as fatal in its bearing against them. But, of course, it is good for nothing to one who denies the correctness of the common doctrine of depravity. If this is fully shown to be untrue, then the alleged necessity for pre-existence vanishes, and, with this, all substantial proof of its reality.

I propose to show, then, finally, that neither reason, or experience, or observation, or the bible, furnish sufficient proof of the doctrine of total depravity. And I begin with the position that it is rendered, in the highest degree, improbable, by the statements of its warmest friends and supporters. Its very antagonism with the sense of moral rectitude in our minds, as they have confessed it, throws the strongest suspicion upon its reality, *and allows us no right to admit it unless it is sustained by direct proofs which cannot be resisted.*

Let us take our author's statement of the doctrine, then, in connection with his account of the manner in which it is regarded by the moral sense of its ablest defenders.

Speaking of Augustine, the Reformers, the Puritans, Dr. Edwards, &c., he tells us that "they have not rested content with the mere fact that all men actually sin from the commencement of moral agency, but have sought to penetrate deeper,

and to find in the antecedent nature of man a sufficient cause of this sad result, so uniform, yet so unreasonable. * * * They have conceived of the human mind as a kind of seed-plot of sin, so to say, in which the seeds and germs and roots of sin were thick sown, and needed only exposure to the influence of the atmosphere and warmth of active life to cause them to germinate, spring up, and bear fruit."

Calvin, he tells us, defines original sin in the following manner: "It is a hereditary depravity and corruption of our nature, diffused through all parts of the soul, which in the first place exposes us to the wrath of God, and then produces in us those works which the scriptures call the works of the flesh. * * * Nay," he adds, "their whole nature is, as it were, a seed of sin, therefore it cannot but be odious and abominable to God. Whence it follows that it is properly considered sin before God, because there could not be liability to punishment without sin." (p. 64.)

It may be remarked, in passing, that this is a singularly loose, not to say false mode of reasoning, which Calvin adopts. He assumes that we shall be punished for this corrupt nature, and then takes this assumption to prove that it is sinful and odious in the sight of God. Then he turns about and takes the fact of its sinfulness to prove that it

will be punished. Rather *circular*, at any rate. Put in a colloquial form, it would stand thus:

Mr. Calvin: How do you prove that men have got a sinful nature?

Reply: Because they will be endlessly damned, to be sure.

But, how do you prove that men will be endlessly damned?

Reply: Because they have got a sinful nature, and, therefore, richly deserve it.

If it were inserted thus in the catechism, I doubt if even the children would accept it. But, let this pass. I may add, in regard to Calvin, who was certainly a man of vigorous intellect, and who is still looked upon as one of the greatest lights of the church, that he attempts to account for the fact that men have such a radically depraved nature, and are, nevertheless, for the most part, ignorant of it, that the devil has the chief control of the matter, and "by concealing from man a knowledge of his disease," hopes thereby "to render it incurable."

The "leading churches of the Reformers took substantially the same views" as those held by Calvin.

Thus, "the synod of Dort assert that all men became depraved through the propagation of a vicious nature. * * * Therefore all men are conceived in sin, and born the children of wrath, dis-

qualified for all saving good, propense to evil, dead in sins, and the slaves of sin ; and without the grace of the regenerating Holy Spirit, they neither are willing nor able to return to God," etc. The Helvetian confession holds, in some respects, still stronger language in regard to this matter. Our author quotes it thus : " We take sin to be that natural corruption of man derived or spread from those our parents unto us all ; through which, we being drowned in evil concupiscences, and clean turned away from God, but prone to all evil, full of all wickedness, distrust, contempt, and hatred of God, can do no good of ourselves ; no, not so much as think of any."

The French Confession is also referred to as saying, of this original taint which attaches to the nature of all men, even before they are born : " We believe that this stain is indeed sin, because it maketh every man, (not so much as those little ones excepted, which as yet lie hid in their mother's womb) deserving of eternal death before God !"

The creed of the church of England affirms, that " original sin is the fault and corruption of the nature of every man that is naturally engendered of the offspring of Adam ;" that " in every person born into this world, it deserveth God's wrath and damnation."

It is unnecessary to continue these quotations.

It is enough, for the present, to say, that similar views were advanced in various other confessions ; that they have been held by most of the eminent leaders of the church from the days of Augustine ; that Dr. Beecher claims that these expressions are not too strong to embody " the fearful realities of the case ;" and that essentially the same views are claimed as necessary to constitute a truly evangelical creed by all orthodox churches down to the present time.

It will be perceived, that, in order to set forth the radical character and intense activity of this depravity, " they resort to the most striking material analogies." They compare it to " a glowing furnace, constantly emitting flames and sparks ; or a fountain sending out polluted streams. * * * They do not regard it as merely a propensity to sin, which is not of itself sinful, but assert emphatically that it is truly and properly sin, and exposes those in whom it is, even before they have acted at all, to the wrath of God and eternal death."

This is the genuine unadulterated doctrine of native depravity : not as it is found in the bible, to be sure, nor as it is seen and known from a healthy view of the world around us, but just as it exists in church creeds, and confessions of faith, taken from the highest church authorities !

I do not propose to stop here, to say, how radi-

cally false I consider this doctrine, or with how much of deep horror it inspires me upon due reflection. I wish merely, for the present, to show how it is regarded by some of the best minds that have embraced and defended it; how all their finer sensibilities, and moral judgments revolt at it, and the fearful antagonism, which they confess exists, between it and the Divine character and perfections. I shall take the quotations from our author's work.

Dr. Woods, after setting forth this proneness of our nature to sin, even before thought, will, or action, and declaring that this is of itself, "the essence of moral evil," "the sum of all that is vile and hateful," inquires how it can possibly be *just* on the part of the Supreme Being, so to recognize and treat it, and his reply, as Dr. Beecher says, "shows, more clearly than words can utter it, the unfortunate, the defenceless condition of the system of Christianity when thus presented." "In essence, it is simply this. It is utterly beyond our power to show that such a proceeding on the part of God is either just or honorable." "Here (he says) our wisdom fails. We apply in vain to human reason, or human consciousness, for an answer." He goes so far as to assert that such conduct is "contrary to the dictates of our fallible minds." Still he maintains that the case is one out of the legitimate province of our judgment,—

that we ought not to decide upon it, but believe that it *is right*, because God has done it!

Here, however, Dr. Beecher, very properly, as I think, disagrees with him. He assumes, virtually, that nothing can be made right, simply and solely, because it is God's act; but is such only because of its conformity to the eternal principles of right. And these principles, being intuitive in our minds, the voice of God himself, speaking through the soul, we are plainly qualified to decide in a case of this kind, and are, in fact, called upon to do so.

Thus, it will be seen that the only way in which Dr. Woods attempts to escape from the difficulty is, to call it a *mystery*; which is, in fact, merely confessing that he cannot escape from it at all. For, as our author shows, this plea may be resorted to in any other case equally well and thus be rendered a fog-bank for the hiding of any amount of error.

Dr. Hodge, also, "an eminent leader of the Princeton divines," after a most vigorous defence of this terrible view of native human depravity, terming it, emphatically, "of all evils the essence and the sum," takes refuge at last, from the pressure of the moral argument, in the some miserable evasion. He could not deny, to his own soul, that the doctrine was, virtually, a deep reproach upon the Divine character; and, instead of casting

it from him, therefore, as we should suppose that he would have done,—unless, indeed, he deemed its evidences absolutely irresistible,—he retreats, like the venerable Dr. Woods, under cover of the convenient plea of *mystery*. He even does more, and worse than this. He represents the case in language than which none can be more offensive, if carefully considered. The dealings of God, with our race, he states, distinctly, cannot be “explained on the *common-sense principles* of moral government. *The system which Paul taught was not a system of common sense, but of profound and awful mystery!*”

What an expression to fall from the lips of a minister of the gospel! It will be particularly observed here that he does not speak of this as being a mystery simply on account of its transcending the range of human reason, but because it *opposes the dictates of reason*. In saying that the gospel is not a system of common sense, I understand him to assert that it is *opposed* to common sense. For the expression would be a very improper one, and one well calculated to deceive, if it merely meant that it went beyond the sphere of common sense, but was in harmony with it as far as common sense could trace it. And, in this view, as positively contradicting common sense, I repeat, what a declaration for a minister of that gospel to utter! What could the veriest infidel,

or bible-hater, on earth, say, that was worse, of it? What possible statement could be conceived of which would please such an one better? If he was really anxious to bring christianity into disrepute, to make sensible men scorn the bible, and spit upon it, and trample it under foot, no sentiment could have been chosen more fitting for the purpose. The stale blasphemies of Paine and Kneeland, could never do the vital injury to the cause of Christ that such sentiments can do, from the lips or pens of christian men.

Pascal, Abelard, and others, our author shows, were more consistent than this, if they were not more rational. The devout Pascal asks, respecting it, "What can be more contrary to the rules of *our wretched justice* than to damn eternally an infant, incapable of volition, for an offence in which he seems to have had no share, and which was committed six thousand years before he was born? Certainly (he adds) nothing shocks us more rudely than this doctrine:" and well might the poor man say so, although he very devoutly believed in it. He confesses its hostility to all our best ideas of honor and rectitude, but supposes that these are very different things, in the Divine mind, from what they are in ours. Our moral perceptions, he would claim, are not to be trusted. I cannot but reflect, here, that our modern divines, who deny indignantly the fact of infant damna-

tion, while they still hold to this radical view of depravity, do so entirely at the expense of their consistency. They have given up all professed belief in infant damnation, because the outraged moral sense of the community will no longer tolerate it; but they should know, if they do not, indeed, that if there is one word of truth in the doctrine of human depravity, as taught in their creeds, and openly maintained by them, then the damnation of all infants is just as necessary and certain as that of impenitent adults can be. And if the moral sense of right in human minds which rebels against it, which has cast it out of the oral utterances of the church, should be yielded to, in this case, then why not consistently yield to it throughout? Why not say that this horrible view of depravity, which lies at the basis of all the real difficulty, and which is equally opposed by our intuitive sense of rectitude, so far as the Divine Being is concerned, shall not be admitted upon anything short of the most irresistible evidence?

That it has not such evidence, I shall consider in its proper place.

Pascal carried his system legitimately through. Having adopted this thorough view of depravity, he did not stop short of accepting its full consequences. He confessed the necessary damnation of infants, and denied that we could judge of

what is right in the Almighty. Perhaps this is, on the whole, the most defensible ground which can be taken on this side of the question. If we only admit that what we call wrong, can be right in God, that our present idea of Satan is the true idea of the Divinity, this view may be quite easily maintained.

Abelard, also, shows how he viewed this doctrine of native depravity, and the injustice which it appeared to involve as presented to his thoughts. Alluding to the fires of hell, he asks, "Would it not be deemed the summit of injustice among men if any one should cast an innocent son, for the sin of a father, into those flames, even if they endured but a short time? How much more so if eternal?" And he, too, takes a straight forward and consistent course here. He refers it all to the sovereign and arbitrary will of God, assuming that it is all right because he does it, and because he can do no wrong. This is, of course, repudiating entirely our sense of rectitude as wholly unreliable.

Dr. Chalmers, too, follows them in this respect; namely, in maintaining a radical view of depravity, and still recognizing its antagonism with our moral judgment. His discourses on this subject, claim the most ultra view of a sinful nature, and defend it with all that plausible rhetoric of which he was so eminently the master, but he confesses, notwith-

standing, that his own sense of right does not harmonize with it.

Now, it is not to be denied that, in all these cases, as in others which might be mentioned, there is, to some considerable extent, essentially the same mode adopted, in trying to get rid of the difficulty; namely, denying the ability of men to judge of these matters, because human reason is carnal, and subtile, and unsanctified, and not to be trusted, therefore, or terming it a *mystery* which we ought not to attempt to fathom. But, as our author virtually argues, if human reason is carnal and not to be relied on here, in what can we trust to it? If our moral sense will not inform us correctly as to what is just and right in God, what business have we to say that any such thing as justice and rectitude belong to Him? How do we know that He is not unjust and malevolent—infinately so,—as bad, indeed, as we have always supposed Him to be good? Is it claimed that revelation tells us to the contrary? I answer: it may use those *words*, but what will it avail if we are incapable of attaching to them a right idea? Our ability to apprehend a moral principle when revealed, rests entirely on the authenticity of our intuitive convictions. And if our best moral judgments are not to be trusted, then we have clearly no right whatever to say that God is either honorable, just, or good. In this case, any statement

we might make respecting it must be sheer assumption, and we have no moral rule or guide that is worthy of a moment's consideration. We have no right, even, to decide on our own character, or the characters of other men, if we take this ground. Because we have no correct rule by which we can try them. We may pronounce the best man bad, and the worst man good, with perfect propriety. If any one has the impertinence to question the fact, all we have to do is to take up the mode of argumentation which we have seen adopted by these orthodox writers—tell him, simply, that it is not within his province to judge of the matter, or that it “is a profound *mystery*,” and thus close the door upon all further investigation. In fact, this kind of reasoning, if carried fully out, is fatal to the very dogma which has caused the trouble. They say that men are horribly depraved, sinful from their very birth, and even before it; and it is enough to take up the principle of their own argument, in reply, and tell them that they have no ability to judge of right and wrong, and, therefore, what they call depravity, may, very possibly, after all, be the highest goodness!

I claim, with our author, that “the intuitive convictions of the minds of created beings, as to honor and dishonor, right and wrong, are the most important in the universe. They are the voice of God himself in the soul. On these all just views

of God depend. * * * Shake them, and you shake the very foundations of His kingdom."

Now, if we consider that this view of radical or total depravity drives its friends into arguments for its defence which are really fatal to it—if it is so sharply opposed to all our best moral judgments of what is right in God's economy, and so revolting to even the moral sense of its advocates—if it leads to results which Pascal called "impossible and unjust," which Calvin termed "the most remote of all things from common sense," which Prof. Hodge directly opposes to "common sense," and by which Dr. Woods is "perplexed and confounded,"—if it involves, as usually held, a theory of forfeiture, which Dr. Beecher confesses, cannot be logically preserved a moment "from an abyss of infamy and just abhorrence,"—then is not my position fully sustained, namely, that the highest degree of suspicion attaches to it, that it is really the most improbable of all things, and should not be admitted except from the force of evidence that was irresistible and overwhelming?

Have we any right to cast such foul dishonor on God, as its best friends acknowledged that this dogma does,—deny the clearest convictions of our reason, and repudiate our highest moral intuitions, in support of a doctrine which is less amply enforced, or which can, in any fair way, be either denied or modified?

Has this view of depravity any such support? Has the bible been rightly interpreted in its teachings upon this subject? Or, will it admit of another and a more rational one? Has the human experience been fully and fairly considered so far as it throws light upon the subject? Or, have those utterances which confirm it come tinged by a morbid imagination? Have the facts of history and observation been fully collated? Or, has the testimony from this source been listened to on one side only? Let us see.

CHAPTER XXVII.

ITS PROOFS EXAMINED.

It is to be regretted somewhat that our author, writing as he did chiefly for his own brethren, or those who nominally profess the foregoing view of depravity, should have found it desirable to dwell so little on its proofs. I should like a more definite statement of its evidences, especially of those which are professedly drawn from the holy scriptures. It is an easy thing to make sweeping assertions, and to say, in broad terms, that it is supported by the bible and observation and a deep christian experience, but such statements amount to nothing, except an expression of individual opinion, which, however honest, may be mistaken.

I do not intimate that our author is in fault here, for I have suggested that the main purpose of his volume renders such assumptions less improper.

Of the scriptural relations of the subject, he says very little. His allusions to these, throughout, imply that the doctrine is a clear and unequivocal teaching of the bible; but, with the

exception of a very few passages, quoted almost without comment, he does not attempt a direct appeal to its pages. He does, however, find it desirable to dwell somewhat on certain other proofs, and, of course, would be most likely to mention those which he regarded as clear and conclusive.

These are, chiefly, the concessions of its opponents, a careful observation of facts and of history, and what he terms a deep christian experience like that of Edwards, &c. Let us consider, in the first place, the concessions of its opponents.

Some of those who reject this doctrine of native depravity, it must be confessed, have used strong terms when speaking of the actual wickedness of mankind. The pictures which Norton, and Dewey, and Burnap, have given of this matter, are singularly dark and appalling. The first-named even colors it more highly than Dr. Beecher himself believes that the facts will warrant. And Dr. Dewey's statement, though I have great respect for the man, is entirely too florid to suit my judgment. Dr. Burnap's account appears to me to be a more sober and correct one, and descriptive, very nearly, of one phase of human life.

But I cannot avoid the impression, in regard to all of these authors, that they did not intend to give their words as they would wish to place them in a logical formula. They did not profess to give

a complete picture of human life, but only a rhetorical presentation of the darker phase of it. About every word which they utter may be strictly true, and yet when the *whole story* is told, it will wear a very different complexion. There may be a large preponderance of good over evil, or of virtue over vice, in the world, and, still, a correct account of that vice alone would constitute a sad and mournful history. Certain it is, that they did not believe in the doctrine of a sinful nature, or in total depravity, as it is technically termed, and they could not have designed to give any support to it. In one point of view, their testimony, perhaps, was still more conclusive in its favor on this very account. For, if having rejected the doctrine, in theory, they, nevertheless, found themselves compelled to state facts which could find no solution short of it, it would be indirect but strong proof of its truth. And this, if nothing else called for it, would lead me to suppose that they designed, not a full and thorough statement of *all the facts* of the case, but only a striking exhibition of a single class of them. To affirm that there are many criminals in a community, would not imply that there was not a still greater number of citizens who were obedient to law and order. Or to say that an individual is exceedingly wicked, would not necessarily show that he had no good in him.

I think that I should do these writers no injustice in suggesting that they were exposed to temptation, from two sources, to overstate, or color highly, the facts of human depravity ; neither of which would impute to them very unworthy motives. They might have desired to concede all, which was consistent with a just regard to principle, to an opponent from whom they were still obliged to differ so very widely. A good man, indeed, will always do this, for sharp contests of opinion carry much with them that is painful. Having chosen a system so radically different from the prevailing orthodoxy, in all its leading features, the love of unity, where it was possible, and even common courtesy, would induce them to yield all which conscience and reason would allow, in presenting any particular, upon which they might chance to treat. Thus, in speaking of depravity, they would feel inclined to give it all the thoroughness and force which a proper regard to truth would warrant. They might not even be conscious that the motive weighed with them, and, still, it might have done so. But there was another inducement to this, which was, doubtless, still more powerful. The gross sum of human wickedness, is really very great. The plague-spots of vice, in its thousand forms, tinge and blacken every community. And to the sensitive and regenerate heart of a minister, who is worthy of his

sacred office, it appeals sometimes with overwhelming force. He passes from some aggravated instance of wrong, perhaps, which may have given a considerable degree of excitement to his feelings, to sin in the aggregate, and pondering upon this one idea alone, it becomes magnified in his fervid thoughts, it pains his moral sympathies, arouses his indignation, and he pours out his description of it in words, as the lava rolls from the mountain. It is not a logical statement of facts, in systematic terms. And it should no more be held to the cold rules of logic, in interpretation, than Dante's vision, or Pollock's Course of Time.

How far these considerations may help to account for the statements of the writers mentioned, I will not pretend to affirm. That similar influences might have had something to do in this case, I cannot doubt. I am inclined to think, however, that their most sober convictions of the realities of human depravity, regard it as deeper and more radical than it appears to my own mind. Their language, as quoted by our author, if interpreted as rhetorical rather than logical, might harmonize with true scriptural views of the subject, and is not inconsistent with the position that human nature, as God made it, is, in all its elements, physical, intellectual, and moral, essentially *good*.

At any rate, as our author admits, they did not believe the doctrine in question, and some of the

strongest declarations against it have been left in their writings. But from the very object of a clergyman's labors, he would be more likely to dwell on the corruptions of the world, than the good it may contain, for it is with the former, more especially, that he has to deal. He wishes to beget no false feelings of security, or to have it thought that he regards the sinfulness of men as of no importance.

The evidence which Dr. Beecher appears to rely on most fully, in regard to this matter, is that of the *experience* of such men as Augustine and Edwards. "Nor is this (he tells us) an irrational ground of belief. If a man is conscious that he has the plague, or a fever, or a consumption, he knows perfectly that he is not well. If by any medicine he is restored to perfect health, he knows what health is, and what is the normal and proper state of the body." Such, then, he regards as properly qualified to testify in the case, and tell us truly what a diseased condition is.

I approach the investigation of this argument with some degree of reluctance. The deep and thrilling experience of such men as Edwards, whose power of passion is equal to their vigor of intellect, and whose whole nature is one of great and unusual energy, carries with it a most impressive moral sublimity. Like volcanic eruptions, or the rumbling of the thunder, it inspires a degree

of awe and reverence. And there is something, almost approaching the thought of sacrilege, in thrusting a critical dissecting knife into such a subject. But, if it is urged as proof of an important doctrine, and great reliance placed upon it, then it must be subjected to the same careful scrutiny as other evidence, and the Christian man, though in the gushing grief of a deep penitence, must submit to cross-questioning like other witnesses.

What, then, is the character of Edwards' experience, and how far may it be taken in proof of total depravity? I confess that I read our author's quotations from his writings, touching this matter, with some little astonishment. In fact, I could hardly credit my senses, the account wore such an air of extravagance. Edwards, it seems, in his earlier history, had a powerful tendency to self-admiration, and manifested a quick and bitter resentment when he was assailed. It is evidently referred to in the following expression. "I have a much greater sense of my universal, exceeding dependence on God's grace and strength than I used formerly to have, and have experienced more of an abhorrence of my own righteousness. *The very thought of any joy arising in me, on any consideration of my own amiableness, performances, or experiences, or any goodness of heart or life, is NAUSEOUS and DETESTABLE to me.*"

That this expression was sincere, I cannot doubt. That he spoke precisely as he felt at the time, will be readily believed. Because every good man will recognize in it one phase of penitent emotion. But it is the language of feeling rather than of reason. It was not a literal decision of the intellect, taking into consideration a broad view of the case, but a fervid utterance of the wounded moral sense, regarding only that one sinful tendency.

Suppose that we interpret it in a strictly logical manner. Suppose that it is questioned closely, as is proper under the circumstances. We might ask, with some propriety, if this deep feeling of self-abasement was a just and proper sentiment; if it was really right and true, then was there not *so much*, belonging to him personally, that was *good*? Then should he not have so regarded it? Or did he look upon this deep humility which he felt with the same disgust and loathing that he regarded all the rest of himself? Was it a just judgment which would allow him to do so? And if this feeling, with everything else connected with him, was really wicked, and his whole moral being, as he tells us, a proper subject of loathing and abhorrence, what confidence should be placed in his statements? What rational ground have we for trusting his word in the case? Does it not look somewhat like introducing a witness in court to prove his own unworthiness of belief? Is there

not something very much like absurdity in the principles it involves? The basis of all proper confidence in Edwards' testimony here must exist in the fact that he was *not as bad* as he represents himself. If he was, no man should place the slightest reliance on his statements; and it would be improper to offer them in proof of anything. But, it may be said, that when he gave this evidence, it was in reference to his previous condition, and did not represent his moral state at the time; that after his thorough regeneration, he was not only qualified to judge correctly, but his account must be considered as wholly trustworthy. I do not know how this may be. His language refers us distinctly to what was his then present condition and feelings, and I cannot understand it but as expressive of his self-loathing at that time. Be this as it may, however, it is, plainly, in the view of sober reason, an extravagant assertion, if considered as a full statement of his moral condition. It may have been a genuine expression of his humility, and should hardly be interpreted as extending further than this. Both he and Augustine were men of a powerful nature, powerful for evil as well as for good. They had violent passions to control, and strong propensities to resist, and in their terrible struggle with these, and the great sacrifices and sufferings which conquest cost them, they obtained a view of their moral nature

which is incorrect as applied to men generally. He who is just recovering from an attack of inflammatory rheumatism, or bilious colic, with every nerve and muscle exhausted by struggling with his agony, though he may know nothing of the operations of other diseases, or even of a state of perfect health, should not, therefore, claim that the physical nature of man was generally and radically defective, though he had suffered bitterly himself.

If a Christian experience is to be consulted on this subject, I will offset that of Pelagius against that of Augustine. That he was equally as good a man, will hardly be questioned, perhaps. Neander speaks of him personally in the highest terms. Yet how different was his experience, so far as we can judge of it, from that which the strong and turbulent elements which contended within him, rendered possible to the Bishop of Hyppo! The christian life of Pelagius was as the growth of the sheltered flower in the spring-time. It was quiet, easy, and noiseless, from the little opposition which he found in his own moral nature to the spirit of the gospel of Jesus. "He did not possess, like Augustine, that mighty nature which could not otherwise attain to peace but by passing through many devious wanderings and hard conflicts. His was a feebler, more limited nature; but one, too, which could more easily develop itself in a smooth

and gentle course,—could be more easily controlled and conducted to its destined end. He was not possessed of the profound, speculative spirit which we find in Augustine: his predominant faculty was a sober, discreet understanding, joined with moral earnestness. In learning he was Augustine's superior. An *earnest striving after moral excellence* had inspired him from the first, and his improvement had been quietly progressive. It was not from some great crisis of the inner life, not through a violent conflict, that he had attained to the faith, or to the determination of consecrating his whole life to God; but, without his being conscious of any opposition to its influences, Christianity acted as an inward principle on his moral development. He did not have to contend with a wild and fiery natural temperament, nor with desires and passions peculiarly predominant. Nor was he thrown into any of those storms of outward life, in which he might have been called to engage in a special struggle with himself; for he led a silent life in the midst of studies and monastic asceticism." (Torrey's Neander, vol. 2: p. 572.) The intimation, in the last clause of this passage, of the life of seclusion which Pelagius led, would apply only to his earlier history. And the suspicion which it might create, that, had he been called to encounter very trying circumstances, his virtue might not have been

found so strong; or that conflict with external obstacles might have aroused within him feelings, showing a depth of native depravity of which he had never been conscious, seems wholly unwarranted; for it is well known that he was an extensive traveller, for those days, visiting the various Christian establishments, and in an almost continual warfare of opinions which must have tried his temper and character very thoroughly.

His experience, therefore, on the one hand, will serve to balance that of Augustine on the other. So, too, if Edwards is cited as a modern instance illustrative of the radical view of depravity, there are to oppose it numbers of equally eminent christians whose experience has led them to entirely different results. Those who were privileged to know intimately the private life of Hosea Ballou, or Dr. Wm. E. Channing, could not rank them below Edwards in all the essentials of high christian attainments, whatever might be said of their comparative intellectual greatness or religious opinions. But their experience indicated an easy, gradual, and not unnatural growth, when contrasted with that of his. And I am sorry to see the tendency of our author to recognize nothing as *profound* in a christian experience which has not all the terrible characteristics of a dread warfare. Are not the operations of the electric fluid, as it quietly and silently ministers to its thousand

ends in nature, as *profound* as those which characterize it in the thunder? Is the testimony of no christian life reliable, that does not exhibit a violent temperament and savage passions? To me, it is far otherwise. I expect, in such a constitution as that of Augustine, or Edwards, or Payson, a sore conflict of the superior with the inferior powers. I do not expect them to gain the mastery of their own souls but by sharp and severe and continued struggles. But it is not so with all men. It is not so with men generally, so far as my judgment and observation extends. Some of the finest specimens of an exalted piety which it has ever been my joy to witness, were those singularly free from all indications of this kind. They exhibited a superior spiritual condition, into which they seemed to have grown by a process as quiet and natural as the unfolding of the germ of the plant which has struck its roots in a genial soil. And I must regard these as quite as genuine, and fully as trustworthy, in the evidence they give of the normal condition of our nature, as those rather exceptional cases referred to by our author.

The language of Dr. Edwards is not of a kind to be received without some care in interpretation. In addition to what I have already referred to, Dr. Beecher quotes from him the following terms: "My wickedness, as I am in myself, has long

appeared to me perfectly ineffable, and swallowing up all thought and imagination like an infinite deluge or mountains over my head. I know not how to express better what my sins appear to me to be, than by heaping infinite upon infinite, and multiplying infinite by infinite. Very often, for these many years, these expressions are in my mind and in my mouth, 'Infinite upon infinite! Infinite upon infinite!' When I look into my heart and take a view of my wickedness, it looks like an abyss infinitely deeper than hell. * * And yet," he adds, "it seems to me that my conviction of sin is exceedingly small and faint. It is enough to amaze me that I have no more sense of my sin!" I have admitted Edwards' sincerity here, but I must doubt his entire sanity and coolness of moral judgment in this statement. I cannot suppress the conviction that it is an exaggerated account, taking its complexion from highly excited emotions. The more I examine it, the more fully am I satisfied, notwithstanding the caution of our author, that it is characterized by great extravagance of expression.

To talk of the sins of a finite mind, however great, as "infinite heaped upon infinite," is to use the language of religious frenzy. I cannot accept them as terms of sober truth, or as a reliable statement of the facts of his moral condition.

I have heard of hypochondriacs, who fancied

that they were bottles, and would be broken by collision with any unyielding substances, and I would about as soon take their impressions to prove that the physical nature of man was made of glass, as I would admit these extravagant terms to prove the radical and entire depravity of human nature. I will accept these as the penitent expressions of a passionate mind, excited in view of its sins, but not as establishing a defective or corrupt nature.

The actual sinfulness of Edwards, I cannot believe was unusually great. All the powers of his being were gigantic and impetuous; and, to bring himself, by the aid of Divine truth and grace, into the high spiritual condition which he finally attained, must have involved intense conflicts and a bitter experience. But, with others,—perhaps with the great majority of men,—nothing equal to it could be expected. They may grow up into Christ, as really and truly, though by a process nearer like that which links the branch to the vine, or the vine to the soil. And this opinion is strengthened by the scriptural representations of the subject.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

ITS SCRIPTURAL RELATIONS.

IN treating of the scriptural representations of the depravity of man, let me begin with Paul's statement made in the seventh chapter of his letter to the Romans. Every one who has been at all observant of his own moral experience, knows right well that there are two conflicting forces ever operative within him. In all deliberate acts, where right and wrong are concerned, these antagonistic influences are felt, more or less, probably, by all men. One of these forces inclines us to evil, and the other holds us back and draws us towards what is right and good. They spring evidently from our complex being—from what we are accustomed to term our higher and lower nature. Passion, or appetite, or pride, or lust, or some motive to improper and sinful indulgence, temptingly allures us to what is plainly recognized by the moral sense as wrong, and immediately the sharp conflict of these two hostile

forces commences within us. We feel the strong inclination to evil, and still there is a voice pleading with more or less of earnestness, that we should not yield. There is always something in the soul which tells us that we *ought not* to yield to the temptation; and if we ever do yield to its power, it is not till this better prompting of the soul is finally overmastered. Every man, I say, feels something of this sort in the course of his own experience. In powerful natures the conflict may be violent and terrible; and in milder temperaments, far less so. And there may be cases in which one has yielded so often and so long, that habit, as a second nature, supervenes, and, finally, under its rigid influence, he gives up the citadel without striking a blow in its defence. Still, in cases of the most long-standing and inveterate habits of wrong, I have heard it confessed by the poor victim, that conscience was not wholly dead; that it would sometimes arouse itself and assert its authority, and the degraded moral sense tell him that he ought to do better.

The favorite Gnostic idea that these two forces proceeded, one from the soul, and the other from the body, was quite prevalent at the time, and doubtless gave Paul the idea of the illustration which he uses in setting it forth. I do not think that he intended to sanction the Gnostic opinion by any means, but he seized upon their view of

the acting relations of soul and body to represent and illustrate the moral conflict which I have suggested as going on, more or less, with all men, between the higher and lower nature. He describes it, figuratively, as a warfare between body and soul. "For I delight," says he, "in the law of God after the inner man; but I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin." The same general idea is kept up all through the chapter,—the idea that, in yielding to sin, there is an internal warfare going on, powers of good battling against temptation, and that evil only gains the victory after struggle,—after the better promptings of our nature are overcome.

This, it will be very plainly seen, is not only the general meaning of the apostle in this chapter, but it will be recognized also as a fair presentation of the facts of the case, just as every man knows them to exist in his own every-day experience. But is not this idea fatal to the doctrine of a totally depraved nature? For how can there be any conflict or warfare going on with our moral feelings when it is claimed that there is but *one party* there? If our whole nature is corrupt and depraved, then there would be nothing to excite rebellion. All the forces would be on one side, and how could a fight be raised in this case?

It is very evident, that if it is once admitted

that there is anything within us that revolts at sin—anything that serves to draw us away from it—that resists any of our evil propensities, even in the slightest degree, we thereby establish the fact that there is so much good in us. Nothing is more evident. And every inclination which we feel towards good, every voice which we hear from within pleading with us to follow it, every prompting to resist wrong or wicked indulgence—all these are so many irrefutable proofs, to my mind, that God has given us a good moral nature. If He has not—if the whole soul is but one mass of depravity, not only incapable of doing good, but even of thinking any—I see not why we should feel any more repugnance to wrong-doing continually than the rain has to falling, or the stream to running down hill. Why, in this case, should Paul speak of captivity? *Captives*, properly, cannot be taken without some little of struggle and resistance. And this struggle certainly implies a moral ability arranged on the side of good.

In the Mosaic record, which contains the only authentic account of the creation, we find the most strong confirmation of these views in the fact that man is said to have been made in the *image of God*. Our author's treatment of this account is not very satisfactory. It evidently stood somewhat in the way of his views. He

maintains that no reference is made to the *moral* image of God, as the image in which man was created ; and that even if this were true of Adam, if he was really made in the image of God morally, it does not follow that his posterity are ! He conveys the idea, so far as I can understand him, that Adam was in the Divine image, only, in something like this sense, namely : that, as the head of the little microcosm, the family, he is the representative, *symbolically*, of God in His relations to the church and the universe. So he regards Paul as interpreting it in 1 Cor. 11 : 7. Then, as a rational and intelligent being, ruling over this material system, he also recognizes man's likeness to God. Indeed, this is the only real and proper sense in which he regards man as having been created in the Divine image ; following, in this particular, the view of Augustine and some of the fathers.

Now that men are new-created beings, as they enter this world, we have already seen is recognized in this history, and whatever that was which was created and called man was said to be in the image or likeness of God. This could not have referred to the physical form which was afterward provided, and into which God breathed the principle of vitality or animal life. It must have been spoken of that which constitutes the personality, what some philosophers term the *me*. And this must have comprised the whole moral and spirit-

ual, as well as intellectual nature; that entire immaterial, or, at least, immortal principle which is, in this life, the body's tenant, and which survives the wreck when the body perishes.

It seems to me utterly improbable that the intellect alone should have been referred to as constituting the Divine image. This is not the crowning faculty of our nature. It is merely a principle which we hold in common with some of the brute creation, only in a higher degree of perfection. And to distinguish this, therefore, as the only peculiarity which constitutes our similitude to God, would not have been attempted, as I think, had the meaning of the text alone been sought for. The moral and religious faculties are our most distinguishing attributes. They constitute the true crowing glory of our being. And that the whole spiritual nature, regarded as an entity, was intended to be represented as *in the Divine image*, appears too plain to be mistaken.

In this sense, we can see the full force and meaning of the Divine declaration, when God pronounced this creation *very good*; and also why James should have spoken of men as being "made in the *similitude* of God." (James 3:19.) Of course, I do not embrace the idea of any goodness in man, when created, except that which belonged to good powers and faculties, bestowed for a good end, and which were in harmony only with a life

of active personal goodness in himself. They were made to be good when used in a rational and legitimate manner.

The common opinion that although this might have been true of the original nature of man, yet that this nature was wholly changed by subsequent transgression, involves too many difficulties, not to say absurdities. Can it be possible for man to change his *nature*, any more than the Ethiopian can change his skin, or the leopard his spots? It does not seem so, certainly. Sinfulness may change the feelings, habits, and general disposition, to some extent; just as virtue or holiness may restore them again; but neither can effect any radical change in human nature. That is, and must forever remain, the same, essentially, that it was when God created it. God alone can ever change it.

Furthermore: does not the bible, all through its pages, describe God as treating man in perfect keeping with this view of human nature? Is He not everywhere represented as holding us accountable? Are not all his requisitions based upon the fact that we are, really and truly, responsible for our moral conduct? But is this consistent with His rectitude, if we are, by nature, wholly depraved, and morally impotent? What is accountability? What constitutes it? Is it not *ability* which we have received, and for which we must

account to the giver? And when it is affirmed that we are accountable morally, it is affirmed, with equal certainty, that we have the moral ability to obey. And this precludes the possibility of any such entire depravity of the will or moral nature, as we have been considering.

No plainer axiom could be uttered, in the view of our moral judgment, than that the subject of any righteous government should have full and entire ability to yield obedience to its laws. To require that which we are wholly unable to perform, would, of course, outrage all our best conceptions of justice and propriety. The Divine history gives us a case of this kind, and very correctly describes it as a barbarous and inhuman thing. I refer to the account of the Israelites in Egypt, in which it is urged as a grave charge against their oppressor, that he required of them to make bricks without furnishing them with the necessary materials with which to do it. And, if it were desirable to discuss so very plain a question further, I might ask whether the Divine Being can justly require that we should perform any actual impossibility? If not, then the full strength of my position must be granted; that the subject of any righteous government must have the full and entire ability to do all which is commanded of him; and if anything were required beyond this,—any impossibility asked,—then he

would be wholly absolved from all allegiance whatever.

Now the Divine law demands of all men perfect love, reverence, and obedience to moral rectitude. It requires of us the purity of heart, and the personal holiness which characterized the life of Christ. And, need I ask whether this could be consistently claimed of beings whose whole nature was corrupt and depraved, and who could do no good, nor so much as think of any? The requirement itself would, in this case, be a mere mockery. The ability to obey would be wholly wanting, and, consequently, all accountability would be taken away.

The great moral advantage which must result from the view of this subject, which I am endeavoring to maintain, may be seen in the following similitude:

Let us suppose that people should somehow get the impression into their minds that all their physical senses were but the organs of deception; that if they trusted to their natural powers of seeing, hearing, tasting, and feeling, they must necessarily become offensive to their creator. What a horrible condition must such a delusion serve to place them in! And suppose that they should also believe that God required them to act on principles wholly in contradiction to the testimony of these senses, and required this under the

pains and penalties of His everlasting displeasure ! I believe that I have somewhere seen this case suggested, but do not remember where ; and I have thought that if it were possible to conceive of a worse state of affairs than this, it was to be found in the condition of those who are told that their moral nature is so wholly depraved that they are utterly incapable of a good thought or deed when unregenerate, and who, at the same time, have the commandment urged upon them,—“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.”

Again : such biblical expressions as those which refer to the righteous and the wicked,—those which speak of some as having done good, as well as of others who have done evil,—appear plainly to recognize this moral ability in all men. If it is said that, in these as well as in all similar cases, where some are recognized as having the ability to do good, or as having actually done good, allusion is made only to the regenerate,—to those whose nature the Divine grace has so changed as to give them this ability ;—I answer, that this statement is inadmissible, inasmuch as it is sometimes said that this ability was had and exercised by the Gentiles, or unconverted heathen. Was not Cornelius, the centurion, a heathen man, to whom Peter was sent to preach the gospel ? and yet, he is spoken of emphatically as having been

a *just* as well as *devout* man. If it is claimed that he had been the subject of the transforming power of the Divine grace, previously exercised, I ask what shadow of proof is to be found of it, except it be in his justice and devotion? And to assume the fact, on this ground, is an entire begging of the question. There appears to be no other evidence that he was not just as fully in his natural state as any other man. And that he was, and that his virtues, whatever they might have been, were the legitimate result of the proper use of his natural powers, and such as any one might attain in the same way, seems fully recognized in the address of Peter on the occasion of that visit. He affirms, to those who had assembled in the house of that same man, that God is no respecter of persons, but that, in *every nation*, he that feareth Him, and *worketh righteousness*, is accepted with Him.

And what is this but a virtual declaration that there were such among all nations, that in heathen as well as in christian lands, there would be found those who lived in the fear of God and in the practice of righteousness? This harmonizes fully with the assertion of St. Paul, that the unconverted Gentiles had the law written on their hearts, and sometimes did, *by nature*, really perform works which were in accordance with it. I know that it was thought, by Prof. Stuart, that although they

had this moral sense of right, or the law in their moral nature, still they were unable actually to obey it, while unregenerate; and, indeed, this is the only consistent ground which those holding his views of human depravity can take; for when it is once conceded that the works of the law were really performed by unregenerate minds, the idea of their utter native depravity must be given up. But is not Paul's statement, in regard to it, (Rom. 2 : 14,) of such a kind as to plainly imply that they did thus render obedience. His simple declaration is that *when* the gentiles, (who were without the written law) did, *by nature*, the things contained in, or required by that law, it offered proofs of the fact, which he was then illustrating, namely, that they *had the law* in their moral nature. The apostle refers to their occasional obedience as evidence of this fact, and, of course, his argument was worth nothing unless their obedience was real. All this seems wholly in contradiction to the common idea of an innate and total corruption, and consistent only with my position, that human nature, in its original elements, is essentially, as God made it, good.

But, it may be asked, are there not some declarations in the scriptures which would seem to carry the idea of a sinful, or, at least, of a depraved nature in man? I reply, that, especially to those who have some such previously formed

conviction fixed in their thoughts, there are, doubtless, some passages which would appear to favor such an idea.

And still, I am very confident that they will all admit of another and a better interpretation. For example, there are those strong declarations which represent all men as sinners, and some of which affirm, not only that all have gone out of the way, but that there was none that did good, no not one. Now a strict and literal construction of such passages would as poorly suit the advocate of total depravity as it would my own views, for it would include the regenerate as well as all others. This would also array it in hostility to the statement of Paul who says that we are all to be judged for our deeds whether *good* or bad ; plainly implying that both would be found to exist among us. And Christ's statement, that there were some who had fed the hungry, clothed the naked, visited the sick, &c., and who would be placed on the right hand, in judgment, for it, is a sufficient proof that such passages as those referred to are to be construed as implying nothing more than a very general sinfulness, or that all men, sometimes, did wrong. And all this may be admitted without involving, to any extent, the idea of a depraved nature. There is, however, a class of passages which are of a somewhat different character, and which may be thought to sustain still more

strongly the common radical view of native depravity.

David says, on one occasion : "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity ; and in sin did my mother conceive me." But I regard this merely as a very strong figurative expression, designed to set forth a deep consciousness of his great transgression. He had committed a crime which, if we consider all the circumstances that attended it, was, really, one of the foulest ever perpetrated by mortal man. And when the sharp pressure of his vicious lust had passed away, and the hour of bitter penitence had come to his soul, he seemed, for a time, to be overwhelmed with a keen sense of the magnitude of his wrongs. It forced out from his soul the bitter exclamation in these strong figurative terms. But that he did not mean to be understood as affirming a totally corrupt nature is very evident from what immediately follows. His next words, almost, are addressed to the Supreme Being, thus : Purge me, and I shall be clean ; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. (Ps. 51 : 7.) Does washing change, in the slightest degree, the *nature* of the thing washed ? Or, worse still ; would a sensible person talk of washing a thing which was *all filth* ?

Would such an operation pay ? Plainly, then, David's *nature* was good enough, only he had perverted and abused it, in some particular instances,

and needed to have his heart cleansed and purified.

This agrees with the prophetic account of the nature of that process to which our Saviour was to subject man. He, it was said, should be as a refiner's fire, and as fuller's soap; and as the refiner could never think of subjecting to his crucible that which he knew was nothing but dross, and as the object of his work is merely to separate the good metals from their impurities, without affecting their nature,—so I cannot believe that Christ would ever undertake to act upon beings who were all corrupt, or change the nature of those who were brought under his influence.

There is another passage which occurs in St. Paul's writings, and which our author refers to as sustaining the doctrine of radical native depravity. In writing to the church at Ephesus, Paul tells them that they were *by nature* the children of wrath even as other gentiles. (Eph. 2: 3.) But, then, he explains it fully, as I think, in the same chapter. He reminds them that, previous to their becoming christians, they had been, as the rest of their people, dead in sins, living according to the course of this world, and, therefore, naturally, *or in their natural condition*, they were exposed to the Divine judgments like other gentiles: judgments which they had then avoided by newness of life through christian faith.

The apostle's language evidently refers, not to their moral nature, but to their *natural condition as Gentiles living in sin*. If this view is correct, and it certainly seems to be, then these words of Paul do not contradict those of the wise man, who tells us that God hath *made man upright*.

Furthermore: did not Christ, our highest spiritual authority, say, when he was upon the earth, "suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for *of such* is the kingdom of heaven?" What could he have possibly meant by this assertion? If he had held the opinions of our author, that little children were demons, or fallen spirits, totally corrupt and depraved, would he have likened them to the inhabitants of the celestial realm? or even to the members of his kingdom on the earth? Did not Jesus, also, on another occasion, tell his envious and ambitious disciples that except they were converted and become *as little children*, they should, in no wise, enter this kingdom? Now granting that these disciples, though somewhat christianized, were still very imperfect, can it be supposed that they were, at this time, so very depraved as fallen spirits would be, who had just entered the world? Or did Jesus wish them converted to something worse than they were then? Did he wish them changed to a condition of total depravity? And, yet, our author believes that little children are imps of darkness.

The truth is, that this doctrine of depravity is at war with the teachings of Christ. It introduces as great confusion into the bible as it does into our reason and moral ideas. We must suppose, from the manner in which our Saviour spoke of little children,—those who were in a *state of nature*,—that he did not regard our moral constitution as radically defective or corrupt, but essentially good, and in harmony with goodness only. It was made, as we have seen, in the image of God, and pronounced by its Creator, *very good*, and I do not think that its author was either mistaken about it, or has misrepresented the matter to us. Then it is neither sinful or wholly depraved.

It may be well to consider here, also, that, as I have intimated in speaking of the natural laws of our being, every creature is legally bound by the laws of its own nature, be that nature what it may. No law can be properly enforced upon it contrary to these. These are of primary authority, and paramount to all others. Thus, for example, it is an excellent trait in a bull-dog to bite savagely, and to fight hard. It is *their nature* to do so, and sensible people are not very apt to be astonished at it, or to find fault with it very much.

The hawk loves a chicken, and the tiger loves blood, and no man thinks of complaining about it, or wondering at it, because they are merely *obeying the laws of their nature*, and doing just what

God evidently formed them to do. Indeed, there is no more certain proof that any being is doing *right*—doing just what it *ought* to do—than to have it faithful in obeying the laws of its own nature. I see not that it makes any difference, in this respect, whether it is man, or some other creature, for the same great rule must hold good throughout all being. And I maintain that if our whole nature is evil, and nothing but evil; if all our natural tendencies are to what we now call vice; then we are solemnly bound, by the highest authority, to follow out its tendencies, and do all the evil which we possibly can. This would become right and good in us. It would be doing precisely what our nature indicated that we ought to do, and were made to do. We should find our true good in evil, in this case, just as fully as the hawk finds his in devouring its prey, and the tiger in seeking his meal of blood. We might then say with Satan :

“ Evil, be thou my good !”

And it would be truly so. We should feel no compunctions of conscience in following it; it would be in harmony with our nature, in obedience to its laws, and must yield us the same happiness which we now realize, and can realize only, in virtue and holiness.

In this case, I see not how any being could properly require us to do good. It would be as

inconsistent and as unjust to command us to be virtuous as it would be to require that the lamb should do violence to its nature and become a beast of prey, or the tiger do violence to his, and eat straw like the ox!

How does this radical view of depravity harmonize with the convictions of our consciences? This inward monitor, I have always been accustomed to regard as speaking by a kind of Divine authority; as being God's voice uttering itself through our moral nature. It is a terribly troublesome thing to people who do wrong sometimes. It not only tells them that they do wrong, but that they ought not to do it, and might, indeed, do otherwise. It does more than this. It tells us all, at times, unregenerate as well as regenerate, that we really do that which is right and good, and it assumes to be a correct and sufficient judge in this matter. It tells us, also, that when we are pursuing the course of evil, or engaged in low and base and sensual and degrading pursuits, that we are abusing ourselves,—perverting our powers and faculties,—that God never made us for such a life,—that it is not in harmony with our moral nature,—and that we can never find true peace and joy in it.

O, there is evermore this voice crying out within the soul of man, pleading, admonishing, and beseeching him, as a tender mother would her wayward child, to rise from his degradation, and to

ascend into his native element of virtue and holiness! It tells all of us, in the clear and earnest tones of truth, that God never made us for a life of wrong; he has not so formed us that we can be happy in it; but that we *are* made for holiness, and purity, and love, and that in these alone can we ever find the true rest and enjoyment which the soul is always craving. Sin has no harmony with our moral being, any more than sickness has with our physical organization. It is to the soul what disease is to the body, and the life and health of the soul are to be found alone in perfect conformity to the perfections of Christ.

This, if there were no other proof of it, would be sufficient to tell me that our moral nature is essentially good, and in harmony with goodness. Conscience does not speak falsely when it tells us that we *do good*. Our moral self-consciousness does not lie to us when it assures us that this goodness is in harmony with our nature. "Great peace have they that love thy law," says the Psalmist, while of the wicked it is affirmed that they have no peace, day or night. These facts are consistent only with a good moral nature in man, and, of course, inconsistent with the idea of his entire depravity.

CHAPTER XXIX.

FACTS OF REASON AND OBSERVATION.

I HAVE considered this doctrine of depravity, as held by our author, more fully than I should have done, was it not, as already suggested, the basis of one pillar which supports his entire superstructure. It is necessary to his religious theory, and that theory cannot be maintained without it, so far as I can see. Because, if human nature is not really that depraved and rotten mass which he supposes, utterly unable to do a good deed, or think a good thought even,—but, on the other hand, if it is, as I have supposed it, essentially good in all its elements, so that sin is merely a perversion, an abuse, and not a legitimate use of its powers, then there is no need of supposing that we were fallen angels before entering this world, or that the Divine character is dishonored by the fact of giving us a sinful nature, and then consigning us to eternal perdition for it. In short, the doctrine of entire native depravity is essential to his whole theory, as it is to every other

known form of orthodoxy ; and if this notion can be thoroughly refuted, then it seems to me that they must all be remodelled or perish together.

I wish, therefore, to render my *exposé* of it as full as my limits will properly allow, or at least have it embrace allusion to its leading features. For this purpose, I have stated the doctrine in the language of our author and other standard writers whom he quotes approvingly, and have suggested that the hostility which it encounters in their own minds and hearts, furnishes a strong improbability against it.

I have considered, briefly, the concessions of its opposers to which he refers, and the great argument which he relies on so fully, drawn from christian experience. I have also considered, to some little extent, its biblical relations ; and the result of the whole is, thus far, a deepening conviction that the facts of human depravity have been somewhat mistaken, and that those who suppose corruption attaches to our nature, must have been somehow deceived in the matter.

All our investigations go to show that the moral, like the physical nature, is, essentially, what God intended that it should be,—in harmony with love and goodness,—finding its native element in this, just as fully as the lungs find theirs in a pure atmosphere, or the fish theirs in the sparkling stream.

I now propose to test these views by the facts of reason and observation. I am confident that their truth will be still more clearly evinced by a thorough analysis of human life, just as it really exists, and just as it always has existed.

It would be in harmony with my views upon this subject to find that the course of the race has been one of gradual improvement, all things considered,—that the present is better than the past has been, and that following the great primal law of growth, and regarding life as a school, we must rationally look forward to ultimate perfection as the true end of being hereafter.

I cannot now enter as fully as I could wish into this question of human progression. I can only ask the reader to take the finest nations of antiquity, at the most brilliant periods of their history,—say Greece, in the age of Pericles, or Rome in her palmiest days,—and contrast the actual condition of things then, physically, intellectually, and morally, with that which characterizes Europe and America at the present moment. I am satisfied that he will come to the conclusion that the world now, bad as it may be, is better, on the whole, than it has ever been.

Then considering human life as it now is, morally, will it sustain our author's views of depravity, or will it be found in tolerable harmony with my own?

I do not propose anything like a clear logical demonstration here, because the subject does not easily admit of it; but I will merely throw out such suggestions as I think may have been partly overlooked in investigating this subject generally, and which go far to fix my own convictions as I have already expressed them.

In the first place, in estimating the actual amount of wickedness now existing, we must not measure it wholly by the amount of human suffering that exists. Very much of this is clearly providential. It springs partly from causes which must be traced back directly to the will of God. He designed that men should suffer when He created and placed them here. It forms a necessary part of human discipline, and was distinctly embraced in the plan of the Divine government.

When God made us, as we are, with mortal bodies, and surrounded us with so many circumstances out of which pain, disease, and physical death must spring; and when he exposed the sinless and innocent to all the wrongs and injuries which the hand of vice can inflict upon them through social and domestic relations, it must be evident that entire freedom from sorrow was never contemplated in His original plan of our present being. Many of our sufferings spring from causes over which we have but very little, if any, control. They are not strictly merited, on

our part, and cannot properly be termed retributive as implying guilt in us. All the pains of infancy which precede the period of personal responsibility, and much of what we suffer in after life, through what we term misfortunes, or from the faults of other persons, all these are evidently of Divine ordination, and flow from the mingled dictates of His wisdom and goodness. It may be very difficult for us to appreciate this, but still it must be admitted. God sees that they are good for us. In some way, mysterious to us, perhaps, they minister to our benefit. They are needed in the great work of our discipline, growth, and improvement. Such was plainly Paul's conviction, when he declared that these light afflictions *work for us* a far more exceeding eternal weight of glory.

Now I doubt not that many of these sufferings are so mixed up with our own personal acts that they become much modified or aggravated by our obedience or sinfulness, but that they would have existed, to some considerable extent,—that there would have been pain, disease, and death, *without sin*, must be admitted.

We must not then, as I suggested, estimate the amount of human guilt by the gross amount of human suffering. We must first carefully set aside all which is to be traced directly to the will and ordination of God.

Then, in the second place, it will not do to measure it by the full amount of suffering or wrong which actually results from sin. Much, very much, of this, is not really intended beforehand, and does not, therefore, properly enter into the sum of actual guilt. There may possibly be a few cases in which the injury done falls short of that intended, but in the great majority of cases it doubtless far exceeds it. And so long as the very essence of sin lies in the will or intention, we must attribute no more to it than is really designed.

Now, how often do the legitimate and necessary consequences of a transgression swell up to a height of magnitude far greater than ever entered into the conceptions of him who first committed it. The half ignorant and half wicked incendiary, applies the torch to his neighbor's outbuilding, not dreaming, perhaps, that the injury will extend beyond the loss of a few dollars, and, very possibly, a near dwelling, or a whole block, or street, or half a town even, is laid in ashes.

Or, a person utters what he deems some trivial falsehood, involving the reputation of his neighbor, not intending any very serious harm by it; and, yet, it may be taken up and circulated, through the habit of gossip, not in itself regarded as very sinful,—among an entire community, impairing reputation and influence, driving friends

and foes into a sharp and bitter contest, out of which may grow litigation, fines, imprisonments, and personal ruin,—producing an untold amount of wrong and suffering in the end,—and all this follows a single word which was never designed, in the beginning, to extend beyond the individual, or the passing moment.

True, its evil effects are aided, to some extent, in such a case, by the added guilt of other parties engaged in the process, but, after all, how much more is really suffered than ever entered into the intentions of any one concerned?

Perhaps these instances will go far to illustrate most of the wrongs that are committed among men. The consequences of sin, almost invariably, extend farther, and sink deeper, than the author of such sin ever dreamed that they would beforehand. And it was in recognition of the truth of this fact, that James said: “Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!”

This fact, therefore, should be carefully borne in mind, in estimating human depravity, namely: that more wrong is committed than is really intended.

Then, in the third place, we ought to take into the account, the fact, that the gross amount of suffering actually caused by sin, as well as the gross amount of evil intended, are almost invariably over-estimated.

This arises chiefly from the well-known fact that *obedience to law* is rather expected as a matter of course, and, therefore, little is said or thought about it, comparatively, while, on the other hand, *disobedience comes generally unlooked for*, and is, consequently, more exciting, startling, publicly noticed, and talked about.

Moral evil, in this respect, as well as in many others, bears a striking analogy to physical evil, and may be very well illustrated by it. Thus: we take up a daily city paper, and as the eye runs hastily over its columns, how very striking will the fact which I have mentioned appear, if we only stop to reflect upon it for a moment. We discover here, whole columns, or pages, perhaps, filled with the details of "horrible accidents," and "awful catastrophes," and "atrocious murders," and "shocking casualties,"—burglaries, thefts, forgeries, and swindling operations; mixed up with accounts of broken heads, and broken limbs, that make altogether a most imposing and exciting array of facts. The sensitive and the sympathizing are shocked by it, and if they give themselves up to thought about it, it will really seem to them, perhaps, for the moment, *as though suffering and crime were the prevailing features of society.*

The facts are so concentrated, and are brought into such prominent notice, and they appeal so directly to the moral sense and the sympathies,

that the effect is deeply and powerfully impressive. But we should remember that the question is not to be decided by this testimony alone. There are two sides to the case, and these witnesses are all for one party. They testify to nothing but the evils and sufferings of society. They constitute hardly a tythe of all the evidence that should be considered. It is a very superficial observation which would take these alone and give a verdict accordingly. We have here the statistics of wrong and misery ; but are there none of virtue and enjoyment, if we would but look them up ? And in forming a decision on a subject like that under consideration, should not the witnesses be heard on both sides ? True, this daily sheet has not given us all the passing instances of vice and woe. Numberless cases of wrong and suffering doubtless exist of which it takes no cognizance. But all which it attempts to do is to give the facts on one side, and, in this respect, it does about all that it can do. It has been exceedingly industrious in picking up every case of a prominent character, and interested news-hunters gather all which they possibly can of the records of crime and woe.

If these are all taken into the account, then, as they surely are, by the believer in radical depravity, should not the long array of facts on the other side,—facts which no one thinks of collecting and publishing, *because they are not*

unnatural, and, therefore, not exciting,—be considered with equal care and attention? That printed sheet, I say, has not gone over the entire field of moral statistics. It may have given a correct account as far as it goes, but it does not go far enough. It has told us of the twenty-five or fifty persons,—say, in the city of New York,—who were drunk and disorderly yesterday, but did it make any allusion to the tens of thousands who were sober and peaceable? It gave us a list of a score or two of criminals, but did it give also a list of the hundreds of thousands who spent the day without crime? It numbered up quite an imposing array of dishonest and disgraceful deeds, but did it count up, too, all the myriads of good deeds which were quietly and truly performed in all the private avenues of that mighty metropolis? It contained a somewhat minute description of accidents and catastrophes, and casualties, involving quite a large circle of individuals in more or less of pain and sorrow. But, on the other hand, it made no allusion to all the vast host of men, women, and children, who arose in the morning, pursued their customary round of duty and pleasure, and retired at night in health, and peace, and enjoyment.

But we must collect all these facts, and listen to all these counter witnesses, before we can make up a just verdict upon the question before us. I

maintain that sin, and crime, and suffering, are not *the rule*, but that they form the *exception* to the rule. They are not the *prevailing*, but they are the *incidental* features of life, merely. And he who regards them in an essentially different light; who believes that the amount of evil and suffering will exceed that of virtue and enjoyment, must look at society with very different eyes from mine.

I have suggested that the question, in its moral aspect, might find a striking analogy in the physical life and affairs of men; and that the latter may help to illustrate the former. The comparative amount of moral evil bears a very fair proportion to the comparative amount of that which we term physical; and according to my best judgment, after dwelling long upon the subject, will not perhaps exceed it. Physical disease and pain, and the suffering which attends them, exist in about the same ratio, when compared with physical health and enjoyment, that sin, and crime, and retribution, do to virtue, peace, and moral comfort. We know very well that the bodies of men are subject to frequent attacks of disease and pain. There is a long and frightful list of maladies to which they are continually liable, and there are times when some of these assume an epidemic, or contagious form that makes them appear very aggravated and dreadful.

Cholera, or yellow fever, or pestilence in some shape, comes and sweeps off its thousands almost in a day. In the cities of the lower latitudes especially, and during the long seasons of sultry and oppressive heat to which they are subject, such dread visitations are most shocking indeed. But it will not do to confine attention to cases of this kind alone, if we wish to estimate truly the comparative amount of disease,—that is, the amount in comparison with the actual amount of health that exists. We must take a much wider reach of observation. We must consider that there are peculiar times of health, as well as peculiar times of sickness: and that there are, doubtless, years of the former where there are months of the latter. In order to judge fairly, we should either take an ordinary case in individual life, and count up all the hours of its health, and contrast them with all its hours of illness; or take a community for an entire generation, and do the same thing in this case. This might give us something like correct data to start from. And although I do not claim that there is no individual instance to be found in which sickness preponderates over health, perhaps for a whole life-time even; yet, in the great majority of cases, probably the latter will outnumber the former by twenty to one. It will be observed that it is one of the rarest things in the world to find a town or a community, even

during the worst periods of disease, in which there are not enough of the well to take proper charge of all the sick. Once in a great many years, perhaps, such an instance will occur, and the astonished and excited feeling which it sends through the whole country serves fully to evince how very rare and unexpected a thing it is.

On the other hand, taking all the towns of the whole country through, and the entire number of their inhabitants, it will probably be found that where there is one person who is sick there are fifty who are in tolerable health, and where illness endures to the amount of one day, health will be found to endure for scores of days.

The amount of the former, as I suggested, is almost invariably over-estimated, chiefly because infractions of a rule are much more noticed than conformity to it would be. I have, for example, twenty familiar neighbors. Nineteen of them have enjoyed almost uninterrupted health for the past year, but I have never heard the fact publicly talked about. One of the twenty was sick for a single week, and the fact formed the topic of conversation as far as it was known. Obedience to a law is not observed. It is common. We expect it, and it does not surprise us to witness it. Disobedience is far more uncommon. We are not looking for it, and it is, therefore, more striking and impressive when it does come.

Now, I apprehend that all this is just as true in morals as it is in physical affairs. A man lives, for an entire year, a very good and upright life,—not perfect, to be sure, for there is no man that liveth and sinneth not,—but sustaining a character that is tolerably perfect, free from all the grosser faults, and adorned with many virtues; but no one takes any very especial notice of the matter. Few think of it. Fewer still speak of it, perhaps. It is not noised abroad, or accounts of it circulated in the daily papers. But, let that same man commit a single offence of any great magnitude, and how readily is it seized upon, chatted over, and wondered at in private circles, and borne abroad through the land on the swift pinions of the press. The account of an instance that may be regarded as illustrative of this fact, somewhat, lies before me as I write. In a religious periodical is an account of a clergyman at the south, of the Baptist denomination, who had perpetrated a foul and horrible crime. He had committed murder. It was an awful deed, and, God forbid, that I should be regarded as its apologist! What a thrill of emotion, and of deep indignation, did the recital of that affair awaken from one end of the Union to the other! What attention and comment did it receive from the press, the pulpit, and private circles! But, during all this, I heard no remote allusion to the thousands, and tens of thousands of

pious, laborious, self-sacrificing, and kind-hearted clergymen, scattered over the land, whose daily conduct is a devout expression of love to God and man. Now, if cases of this latter kind were not common and expected, and if cases of the former kind were not uncommon and unexpected, they would not be received and treated in the manner which I have represented. Moral evil, like physical disease, is *unnatural* and excites attention. Moral obedience, like physical health, is the *natural* state, and passes unnoticed like other ordinary things.

Then, too, there are cases where sin, like disease, becomes epidemic. This is the fact especially in certain localities like the famous "Five Points" of New York. Such spots are subject to moral yellow fever, or spiritual cholera. They are infested by sins so foul as to assume the type of moral plague, or deadly pestilence. Whoever looks through the locality which I have specially designated, will see enough of human depravity in its worst forms to fill him, if he is a good man, with sickness and loathing. But this is not all which he may see, even there, if he will look carefully. Those bloated, or haggard, or attenuated forms of squalid disease and suffering are not all entire masses of moral corruption, horrible and forbidding as they may appear. No, buried up under the most disgusting exterior, are many a

trait of native goodness and generosity and love. These wretched outcasts are not *wholly lost*. Ask the God-honoring, humanity-loving, missionary there—Rev. Mr. Pease. He will affirm what I have stated. He will say that the image of God in man, though mournfully tarnished and defaced, is not wholly blotted out while life lasts; that a course of truly christian treatment may call out its features freshly again, and that even these perishing ones may be redeemed,—given to virtue and an honorable life. I do not mean to allude here to this subject in a way to involve the Rev. Mr. Pease's religious opinions. I believe that he is a worthy member of the Methodist communion, though I should be ashamed to ask what his sectarian relations are so long as I see him doing Christ's work. I know by that token alone that he belongs to Christ. But I wish to allude only to his moral judgment in a matter-of-fact case that falls under his own immediate observation. And I doubt not that he will readily testify, that so far as it regards what the world usually denominates virtuous conduct, and a life of respect and usefulness, the miserable devotees of vice around him may generally attain to it with the proper aid and guidance of good men. So that, although there is enough of the devil to be seen in those foul dens of moral filth and pollution, there is still something of God and of Christ there too, and indications

that human nature, in its worst state, is not a totally depraved and worthless thing.

Consider, too, how very small are those localities, and how few in number, when compared with the size and number of those regions which enjoy, for the most part, a condition of moral and spiritual health. As I have mentioned New York, I will take that city as an illustration. It has, I will suppose, 400,000 inhabitants. Now if there are 100,000 from among them,—and I think that this would be a large estimate,—whose life, for a single day, develops more of evil than of good, it still leaves the 300,000 in whom good, for the same time, predominates. And if the comparison is pushed through the whole vast body of humanity, the good will be found to prevail over the evil, very much as health prevails over disease. It appears to me that any one must see and acknowledge this, who will be faithful and candid in the examination.

If it is said that all the sins which men commit are not thrown upon the surface of society; that it is a very superficial observation which takes into the account only such as are visible; that many vices are hidden in the hearts of men, and, from their very nature, are shut out from public view;—I am quite ready to admit the fact in its fullest extent that is rational.

And my reply to it is—1. If it is really hidden

and unknown vice that is referred to, and the fact of its subtile character forbids me to speak of its amount as comparatively small, does not the same fact equally forbid any one to assume that it is more extensive and enormous?

2. If much of the vice belonging to human life is shut out of sight to other hearts than those that cherish it, is not the same thing true, and to an equal extent, in regard to human virtue? Is it not the nature of the latter, quite as much as of the former, to conceal itself from public observation? Is not purity quite as modest and retiring as impurity? Nothing, then, is lost to my argument from this source. I will offset the private sins of the world against its private virtues, and take the estimate of the aggregate amount of each from what is developed within the sphere of our observation and knowledge. And I say that the moral evils, like the physical sufferings of life, are generally over-stated; that they are not as great as they are claimed to be; and that they are as extensively over-balanced by the moral good which exists, as health prevails over sickness, or pleasure over pain.

Taking these as established or admitted facts, there are several inferences which seem to be legitimate, and which are deserving of consideration.

1. Society could not be expected to exist for

a very long time if there was found to be a greater tendency to sickness than to health, physically, among men. If disease was the rule, and health the exception, the race must perish from the earth very soon, and very certainly.

2. It may be claimed, with equal certainty, that the very existence of society is involved in this question of human depravity. If the moral nature of man was actually as corrupt, as is maintained by the theory which I am opposing,—if its tendencies from birth were all to evil, until regenerated,—then human society could no more exist at all than it could in the case before supposed. Its very foundations would be rent away; its most numerous ties sundered; its affinities destroyed; and the whole fabric could never sustain itself for a moment without constant extraneous and unnatural aid from the Divine power.

3. If the vices which actually exist in the world cannot be rationally explained or accounted for, without seeking their causes in a corrupt nature, existing anterior to will or action, but, if they must really be regarded as proofs of such native depravity, then why not take up the same mode of argumentation, from the facts of physical disease and pain, and claim that there is an equally defective physical constitution? Why not maintain that the natural and legitimate tendency of all the physical powers, and of the entire organic

structure, is to generate sickness and produce distress? Plainly, because no good mind would believe it. Especially would no physiologist or physician acknowledge it. They would claim that the entire system was constructed with a wise reference to the health and physical enjoyment of men, and that disease and pain are exceptional to the great physical law of our being.

The same remarks will hold good, so far as the principle is concerned, if applied to the moral nature of men. It was created in the image of God, and constituted with a wise and beneficent regard to its moral health and happiness. This is the great primary law of moral as well as of physical existence. And all moral evil is exceptional to this law, just as fully as pain and disease are to the law of our physical nature.

A full and fair survey of the facts of the case seems to warrant these inferences. Taking the physical facts, they are briefly these: All men are subject to occasional attacks of disease. Sometimes these are severe and of long duration. But no respectable individual would claim that these argue a defective physical constitution. No surgeon would say, in dissecting a human body,—This joint was made on purpose to ache; this muscle to produce spasms; this nerve to generate pain; or this gland to secrete disease. If he did, our school-children, at the present day, could teach

him better. I would not be understood to imply that there are no germs of disease, or susceptibilities to it, which are hereditarily transmitted. Nor would I deny that something of this could be found also in regard to moral qualities. Perhaps the tendencies of modern science are to the establishment of the fact that moral qualities, as well as physical and intellectual, are transmissible from parent to child, to a far greater extent than has been generally supposed.

Be this as it may, however, I can claim on the authority of our most scientific men, that no portion of the physical system of men has ever yet been discovered, the direct object of which was to promote disease. Physical maladies and their pains all proceed from the infraction of the laws of natural order, and are incidental to their operation and end.

The moral facts, too, are of the same general character in these respects. Whatever vices or sins may really exist, no moral surgeon can find their cause in the natural action of the faculties of the moral constitution. He may dissect it with all possible care, and he will find no power, or passion, or propensity of the nature, which is not intrinsically good, and made for good, and the legitimate operations of which will not subserve a beneficial end. We may take a single example to illustrate this, and the one most unfavorable, per

haps, of any to my position. I mean *selfishness*—that element of our being out from which are supposed to spring, as from a central source, all the varied forms of wrong. Is this element in itself considered really bad? How could we exist without it? If it were to be entirely eradicated from our hearts, how could we have any care for self—either for the preservation of life, or health, or anything else which was of a personal character? And how could we do our whole duty by others in this case? Is not some degree of care for ourselves necessary in order to properly care for them? And how can a prudent and proper care for self, that does not interfere with duty to others, or with others' good injuriously, be sinful? Is not something of this possessed even by the most fully regenerate heart? It seems essential to human existence. Indeed, what do all the promises and threatenings of the bible address themselves to but this principle? Nay, more, if we had nothing of this element within us, how could we understand or obey the requirement of Jesus—"Love thy neighbor *as thyself*?" Does not this commandment pre-suppose a justifiable and proper love of self? And if we were wholly without anything of this kind, then we should have no rule of regard for others based on this admirable precept.

The principle in itself, then, is perfectly just

and good ; but, like most other good things, is liable to be abused. Its legitimate use is right, and its abuse or perversion only is wrong. So it is, indeed, with all the attributes of our moral being. God made them, in themselves, essentially good, and they must forever remain so for aught that I can discover ; though we are liable at any time to abuse them, and render them, so far, curses instead of blessings.

May we not say, then, with the greatest assurance, that the radical view of depravity is wanting in good and sufficient proof? Its alleged evidences can be greatly weakened, if not entirely destroyed. And so long as this is the case we are not justified in accepting it, involving, as it does, the consequences so ably presented by Dr. Beecher. If his peculiar notion of a pre-existence is not admitted in order to its explanation, then it involves a view of original sin such as appeared to Pascal "impossible and unjust;" and to Calvin, "the most remote of all things from common sense;" which an eminent leader of the Princeton school terms "a profound and awful mystery," actually opposed to common sense; that "perplexed and confounded" Dr. Woods; and one which, if admitted, would, as believed by Dr. Beecher, be properly regarded as infamous and abhorrent. Whelpley, in his protest, affirms, that "no scheme of religion ever propagated amongst

men, contains a more monstrous, a more horrible tenet. The atrocity of this doctrine, (he says) is beyond comparison."

"It were easy (says Dr. Beecher) to produce similar utterances from Socinus and John Taylor and their followers; for in fact, the argument has been one and the same, from age to age. It has ever been a bold, earnest, and eloquent protest, in the name of the immortal principles of honor and right, against the imputation to the God of the universe of such acts as would conflict with justice, fatally obscure his glory, and fill the universe itself with mourning and gloom."

CHAPTER XXX.

HARMONY.

I HAVE thus gone over, briefly, the chief particulars involved in Dr. Beecher's volume, and which I sincerely thought should be set in an entirely different light from that in which he has placed them, in order to a *successful vindication of the Divine character*. That he has given the best system of relief, in this respect, that I can conceive possible for one holding his general religious doctrines, is cheerfully admitted. I deem it, by far, the best system of orthodoxy which I have ever seen ; more consistent, as a whole ; less offensive in its prevailing tone ; and, pushing the conflict, which must exist between all conceivable forms of his main principles, and the Divine perfections, farther into the background than any other system, he has rendered it much less painful to those good minds which will rest content with its somewhat superficial examination. That he still leaves the most distressing difficulties unsolved, and still holds on to the great principles which

have always made other forms of orthodoxy objectionable,—that he leaves the character of the Supreme Being still under an impeachment of the gravest kind, seems to me a terrible reality.

I have endeavored, not only to exhibit this fact, but to give such a presentation of the case as shall help to remove the chief difficulties which his views appear to involve. I have attempted nothing new upon the subject, for after a discussion of fifteen hundred years' duration, little that is new remains to be said concerning it. He will find its main views, if they ever attract his notice, old acquaintances, I presume, and I can only hope, therefore, that the form and manner of their statement here may possibly induce him to give them a candid and thorough re-examination. I pray him to do so, for the sake of the myriads who will never accept his solution of the problem, who are hungering and thirsting for a better view of God and of human destiny, who would take that view from him when they might not from me, and who, without it, are doomed to live without faith, and the hopes, and guidance, and consolations of religion.

That there is harmony between the principal views which I have endeavored to exhibit, when considered in relation to each other, and to our reason, and to the bible, and to the Divine perfections, is, with me, a conviction than which none

can be deeper or more devoutly cherished. That, if they are true and capable of a fair and full defence, they are of the most incalculable value, must be apparent to every one. Taking some of the best established facts and principles of our author's work, I feel driven to the adoption of the general results which I have stated. I will bring together here their main features that their relations and harmonies may be seen at a single glance.

1. God is infinite in wisdom, power, justice, and goodness. These attributes must exist and act harmoniously in every thing which he may plan, purpose, or attempt to accomplish. Every thing connected with his vast economy, and all his dealings with his creatures, here on earth, are under the guidance of a beneficence which knows no limit or change.

2. Accordingly, in deciding the question of human existence—that is, whether human beings should exist—he must have been controlled by his infinite prescience, and permitted no infinite hazard, or what would have been to him, the *certainty* of an evil of infinite duration.

It must have been clearly foreseen by him that the existence of every individual would be, on the whole, a *good* to itself, before he could have moved the first step in the primary act of creation. Of course, I speak here of what he could and could not do, merely in view of our highest and

best conceptions of what is consistent with his infinite perfections. These, it would seem, really rendered any different plan impossible.

3. This rule of action, on His part, must have regarded each individual of the human race, its interests and destiny, with all the care and discrimination that would be requisite did no other person exist. The true good of no one could, in the end, be sacrificed to the good of any other being, or number of beings. It was at the Divine option, in the beginning, to create ; and when the act of creation was consummated, it was solemnly obligatory upon the Supreme Being to see that no individual was an absolute loser by it.

4. The legitimate application of this rule, would not prevent Him from arranging and carrying out a plan involving temporary evil and suffering to any conceivable amount, even, which could possibly be rendered, in the end, under his guidance, subservient to the highest and best interests of all those connected with it. Thus, a moral existence, embracing what is usually termed free-agency, if He foresaw its results to be of this character, in each individual instance, might be appropriately chosen in preference to all other modes of being, wholly in harmony with His rectitude and benevolence.

5. Evil, as we term it, and suffering of any kind, when allowed to exist as a *means* of ultimate

good, and when permitted by deliberate choice as an *end*, differs as widely in character as light and darkness, truth and falsehood. The former may be a manifestation of true kindness, while the latter, disguise or conceal it as we may, is the very essence of cruelty itself. "It is not enough to prove cruelty that pain is caused." "Cruelty consists in the infliction of suffering without a benevolent regard to the sufferer's true good." "This is (not only) the dividing line between the Divine and Satanic spirit," but it is everywhere, among men, the line that separates good and evil, right and wrong. In all human affairs it is so recognized.

6. It would be in perfect harmony with this rule, and these principles, for God to create and endow men as I have supposed that he did. He might give them any constitution and faculties, however weak or imperfect, that, in conformity to the great primary law of growth and development, would, in the end, attain that supreme elevation in which the true and proper destiny of existence might be perfectly realized.

With regard to this constitution and these endowments original to man, it is wholly unimportant, comparatively, whether I have stated them accurately or otherwise, since any necessary variation may be made which will not encounter the great principles involved in the final result.

7. In this view of the case, although moral freedom, or free-agency, as it is called, does not secure immediate and perfect obedience, yet it should not, properly, be termed degraded, while it is evidently consistent with the general plan of which it forms a part. Conscious freedom, when a sense of it is first attained, is somewhat exhilarating, *and, until informed*, has, perhaps a tendency to lawlessness. But as the wantonness of its first excitement passes away; as it finds itself enclosed and permeated by natural and immutable laws, and becomes enlightened as to their nature and character, either from experience, observation, or any other source, it must gradually learn conformity and obedience as the essential conditions of true good. And that its ability to turn from evil at any period of its career, will remain with it; that God will never close the door against it, but will rather, through Christ, forever continue to aid its return until the mediatorial work is complete, with all souls reconciled to God, appears fully established from the fact, that such freedom is an essential element of the moral nature, and cannot be destroyed, consistently; and, also, from the inspired promise, that Christ must reign till all things are subdued unto him; that he will then deliver up the kingdom into the hands of the Father, and God be all, in all.

8. The laws of our being, physical, social, intel-

lectual, and moral, are all founded in nature and the eternal fitness of things. There could not be existence, such as we possess, without them. They are immutable in their operations, and certain, though beneficent, in their character and results. They are the same, in this respect, whether known or unknown to us ; whether revealed to us through intuition, reason, observation, experience, history, or the bible. Of those which are moral, embracing the religious, the highest and most perfect development is made in Christianity. Its divinity and authority rest upon this basis.

9. These laws seek the benefit of each individual. True good is only to be attained in obedience to them, and they rest only in *obedience as an end*. No substitute will ever be accepted in the room of this, for nothing but this can ever realize their object.

10. All their penalties are arranged and ordained with a wise view to secure the law's ultimate purpose. No penalty was ever instituted, which will tend to defeat this purpose, if inflicted, or which is inconsistent with it. In their nature they are all disciplinary and remedial, and are intended to secure filial and perfect obedience. No penitence, therefore, can avoid their infliction, no forgiveness evade their sure visitation. They are no less good than just, and are demanded by a wise and far-

seeing kindness as fully as they are by the principle of equity.

11. All men were created mortal, subject to pain, disease, and natural death. The death of the body is not the original penalty of transgression, or retribution in any sense except where it is hastened by the voluntary acts of the sinner. It forms a necessary part of the Divine economy, and it is intended to introduce us to a higher spiritual school when our primary course of trial is ended. In itself it is no evil, but a means, in the providence of God, of greater good.

12. No forfeiture of rights, on the part of the creature, is possible, which touches his claims on the continued and legitimate exercise of the Divine perfections towards him. If he does wrong, it is a poor reason for supposing that God will do wrong too. God will always do right, whatever the creature may do. He will be forever just, and wise, and good, and benevolent, and to say that he will reward at one time and punish at another, is only claiming that the *manifestation* of his perfections will be varied, so as to adapt themselves to the differing conditions and wants of his creatures.

13. This world, instead of being a hospital for the medical treatment and recovery of fallen spirits—a process on which their immortal destiny is suspended,—is a primary school for the incipient

stages of a culture, growth, and education, that are to last forever. All its imperfection, to our eyes, are what those of such an institution would necessarily be to the eyes of weak, short-sighted, and imperfect childhood. Some of its arrangements and provisions, may not be fully or easily comprehended by us ; but, though their rationale may be beyond our grasp, still, they do not positively conflict with our best conceptions of the rectitude and beneficence of Him who has ordained them.

The entire future is no more suspended on the conditions of the present, than the child's entire life is on his first day at school. Regarding probation in this light, as a general process, of gradual but sure approximation to God and perfection, its entire character and object is radically changed ; and facts, which would seem to be at utter war with the Divine perfections, admitting our author's view of probation, are, in this light, fully reconciled to their highest and best exercise. They may, indeed, in this view, evince a wisdom of arrangement equal to the beneficence which shines in their purpose.

14. The radical view of human depravity, which is a great corner-stone of all systems of faith resembling that of our author, is not, and cannot be sustained either from reason, experience, the bible, or the facts of human life, that fall under our immediate inspection.

Bad enough, I admit the world to have been in all ages, according to history, but it should be remembered that history,—from facts already suggested, viz: that violations of law are *unnatural*,—has busied itself much more with the evil than with the good of men, and that vices have been embalmed in its pages, while virtues have lived and passed away almost unknown, perhaps, except to their authors and to God. Still, the world has always had much of wickedness in it, and it has now, notwithstanding all its improvements on former times. Nor would I, for one moment, be regarded as the apologist for this wrong. I have not been pleading in excuse or extenuation of the sinner's guilt. Had this been a particular involved in the object of this investigation, I should have spoken of it with all that pressing sense of its enormity which any good mind must feel. But my whole course of argumentation has been with regard to the Divine dealings, and no allusion to human deserts has been made except to such as were directly involved in this other and higher aim. Of the actual sins of men, in all the light and attainments of the nineteenth century, I must feel a mournful conviction; and I had much rather be engaged in efforts for their removal, than in endeavors to shut them out of sight, or improperly explain them away. Still, the present course seemed to be necessary. All questions of the

actual amount or demerit of sin, are nothing, in comparison to the main question involved in this discussion, of the character and perfections of God. This is properly paramount to all others. I have, for many years, felt deeply and with an increasing conviction, that the first and greatest want of the world now, was better views of God and of human destiny. Everything which is truly fearful in religion owes its vital efficacy to human ignorance and superstition. This element has had great—I will not say healthy—power upon the public mind in ages past. But it has been gradually losing its hold and influence, just in proportion to the increase of light and intelligence. Its former entire sway has been broken; its ancient control has died out, and it has now, with far the greater class, become wholly inoperative. The members of this vast and daily increasing class can never be addressed favorably with a stern and threatening dogma. They lack faith in its reality. They do not care a fig for its terrors. Nay, they are rather repelled by this mode of approach. They deem it only adapted to children or silly women. They will either turn it aside with a laugh of derision, or have their manhood aroused to indignation by the thought of being frightened into anything! And with the vague notion that there is nothing better for them,—that all religion is but a priestly device, and should be maintained

only as a system of police for the ignorant,—they live on “without hope and without God in the world,” when many of them might be won to religious faith and obedience, could religion only be presented in a light consistent with their reason, and harmonious with their sense of the Divine rectitude and benevolence.

Within a few moments of the time of penning this sentiment, a letter was put into my hands, so strikingly illustrative of its reality, that I can hardly avoid an allusion to the fact here. A young man of good talents and fair reputation, writes, that he was educated from childhood in the strictest views of Connecticut orthodoxy. He came gradually, as he grew up, to identify these with the teachings of the revealed word of God, and with nothing to insinuate a doubt of this fact, they were held as, essentially, one and the same thing. But the character of these views troubled him from the first dawnings of reason. He could not reconcile them with the acknowledged character and disposition of God. His intuitions, as well as the concessions of the religious public, would not allow him to doubt that, if there was a God, he must be infinitely just, wise, powerful, and good. And, failing to harmonize these with the religion which he had been taught, he finally cast the latter away, together with the bible, which, as he supposed, contained it. On leaving

home he was brought into contact, for the first time, with minds holding essentially the views which I have been endeavoring to defend in this volume. They opened to him an entirely new view of the whole matter. And, taking up the clue furnished him, and following it faithfully out, finding, as he thought, ultimately, that the bible really harmonized with them, they were gratefully and devoutly accepted, with a depth of faith, the kind influence of which, I doubt not, he will carry with him to his grave.

Thus from the ranks of the unbelieving was won an ardent disciple of Christ. O how many will find, in this brief sketch, an outline of their own experience! Several clergymen, whom I know, will recognize it as analogous to theirs, and although I do not name these facts as settling the truth of any theory, yet, had they not ought to suggest some searching questions to those who hold the prevailing but offensive opinions?

The great need of the world now is, I repeat, better views of God, and of human destiny. They are needed as allurements where fear has failed to move the soul. Many hearts are waiting for such an influence, as the parched earth waits for the genial rain.

Stubborn souls, which no thunders could terrify, or threats control, have bent before it. Sin-hardened cheeks has it wet with tears of deep contri-

tion. Indeed, wherever it is made real, it has a practical power such as is found in nothing else. It brings God very near to us, not in a form to terrify or repel, but in the calm dignity and attractive beauty of parental tenderness. It represents him as evermore obedient to His own laws of right, and as overcoming evil with good, as He has required us to do it. Nothing can serve so fully as this to endear Him to all good hearts, and to make His name hallowed and adored with a fervor compared with which ordinary piety is cold.

Such a holy and sanctifying influence do I solemnly believe springs legitimately from the general views which I have herein advocated. I deem them eminently adapted to produce piety and morality, as well as true penitence for sin, for He who taught us that “the *goodness* of God leadeth to repentance,” has left the recorded experience of the early christians for us; viz.: “We love Him because He first loved us.”

The great leading feature of these views, which sheds over them all the divinest radiance, which blends them as harmoniously with the Divine perfections as the colors are blended in the solar rays,—the conviction that all evil is finite and temporary, and all retribution remedial and limited,—“is well known,” says Dr. Sawyer, “to be no novel doctrine in the world. It is as old as

christianity itself, and has been believed and taught by some of the best and most learned men in the christian church, and in almost every period of her history. It is remarked by Doederlein, that the more distinguished for learning any one was in christian antiquity, the more he cherished and defended the hope, that punishment would ultimately come to an end. And Olshausen, another learned German, says that Universalism is, without doubt, deeply rooted in noble minds; it is an expression of the longing for perfected harmony in the universe."

That these views will attain to a general prevalence, at some time, I cannot doubt. That this will occur at as early a day as I had once hoped, I have some reason to question. All which is truly bad in men opposes them. Sterner and more severe dispositions, require a sterner and more severe faith. The heart which has much pride, and loves vengeance for its foes, will be more attracted by systems which bear affinity to itself. Men who would themselves be tyrants, had they but power, will feel less averse than others to the belief that God is such as they are. And I suggest this fact without the slightest intention of casting any severe imputation upon the many kind-hearted and excellent men who still hold to views which I regard as unutterably cruel, and which, if true, would render an intense feeling of

hostility to God a virtue. These believe, not from choice, but from a stern necessity springing from circumstances and education. If they were free to choose, they would select a better creed, but some form of orthodoxy has been interwoven with their entire culture, and, however severe its pressure upon their better feelings, they find it difficult to wholly shake it off. But such live in a continual conflict, dark glimpses of which we have exhibited in our author's work. To them the glory of God is often in eclipse. Gloomy problems haunt their hours of meditation, and mingle with their nightly dreams. Dark shadows rest often upon their spirits. The world seems to them cold and dreary. God is not deeply loved, because He is regarded with that fear which perfect love casts out. "He that feareth is not made perfect in love." All such I truly pity. They are deserving of a better condition. They ought to have the light of that faith which would make all self-sacrifice the grateful free-will offering, rather than the price paid to purchase a tyrant's favor.

This class, I am happy to believe, is somewhat rapidly approximating the more cheerful views which I have been advocating. They are gradually won over by their attractive influence, while the bigot, and the self-righteous, for the most part, regard them with the most intense hatred. The

spirit of these views is interfusing itself, more or less, throughout all sects. No denomination in this country or in Europe has entirely escaped its modifying influence. Private advices, during the past year, from England and the continent, assure me of the great numbers in established churches, clergy as well as laity, who deeply sympathize with these views, and who are rapidly preparing for their more public and open support. Indeed, I regard them as the world's last hope. I ask for them a fair hearing, at the bar of reason, a fair trial by the test of a thorough practice. I have a right to ask this respectfully. For fifteen hundred years, orthodoxy, in some form, has had control of the christian world. Most of its essential features have been the established and prevailing religion, both in the Greek and Latin churches—in the Catholic and Protestant sects. *It has had a full and fair trial, and it has signally failed to meet the most pressing wants of the world.* That its better elements, without which, indeed, it could not have existed, have done good—great good even—I will not deny. That its defects unfit it for the present need of society, has, I think, been sufficiently shown. I look, therefore, to a more liberal and kindly faith as destined finally to supplant it. I regard this as essentially the last hope for men in this life. And if, under its milder but more searching influence,

a better day does not dawn for christianity than has ever yet shone—if the race is not lifted by it from the depths of its present degradation and worldliness—then will my deepest and most cherished convictions prove but a pleasant dream, and my faith even in the being of a perfect God will be shaken. This may seem to be the language of mere enthusiasm, but it is the result of the soberest reflections of many years. If it is a dream, it is a glorious one, and I would not be waked from it. No, let me dream on thus while I labor, and my toils will be richly repaid in it. Shake my faith in this certain result, and I shall faint and sicken by the way-side. I shall have nothing on which to rely. Life will be aimless and meaningless, and Death the king of terrors.

But in the serene light of my present trust, I may feel discouragement, but never despair. Shadows may pass over the soul, but they are rapidly succeeded by sunshine. I know in whom I have put my trust. He will never leave or forsake His children. No; He may cause grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of His tender mercies. Here is the sure basis of my confidence. The light of immortality will dispel all shadows. Tears will be wiped from off all faces. Sorrow and sighing will flee away. He who careth for the little sparrow, who heareth the ravens when they cry, can never be regardless

of His children's prayers ; and day and night, from every segment of the globe, these prayers rise for the spiritual redemption of all men. He has His own time and means for its accomplishment. That it will be finally realized, I do not, cannot doubt. The being which has commenced in so much of weakness and imperfection here, shall rise to perfection and glory hereafter. Thus, the present, and all other conflicts, will end in complete and universal harmony.

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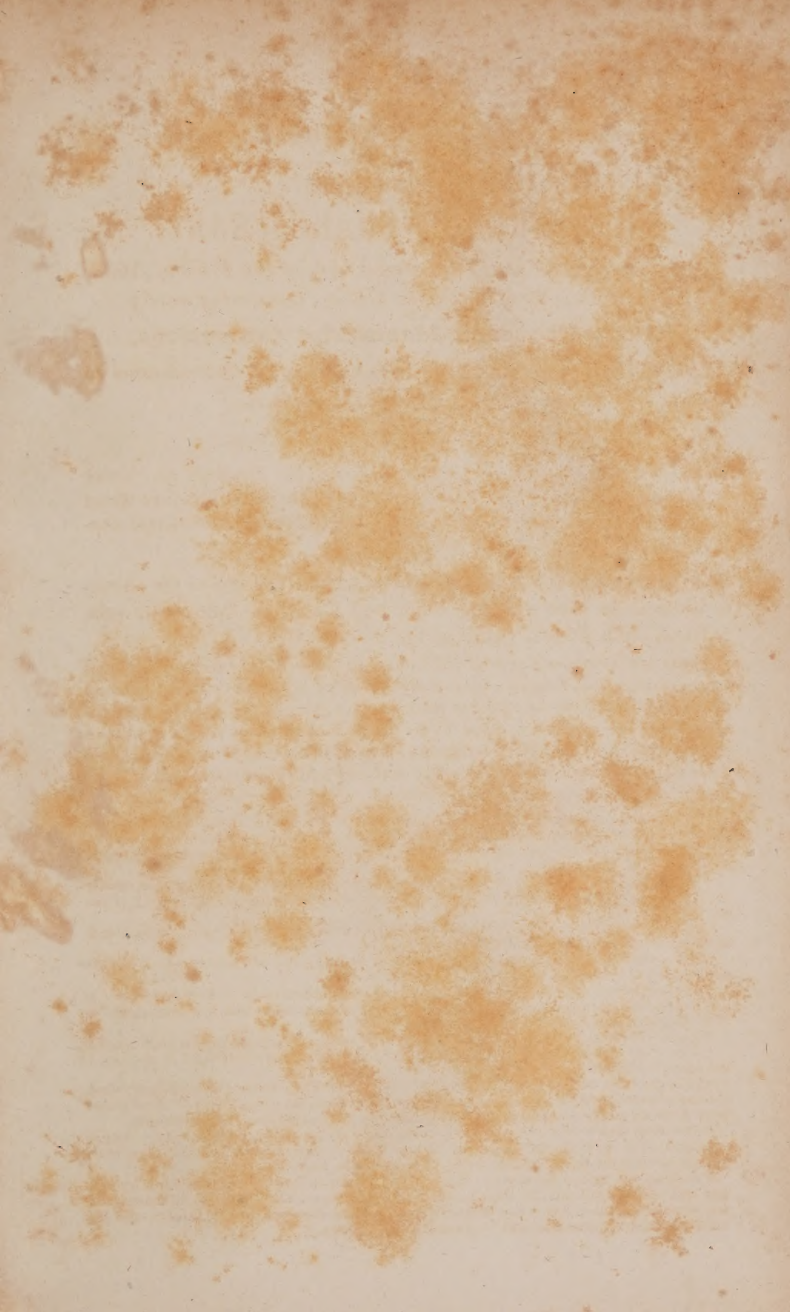
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